The THREE KINGDOMS

三國演義

VOLUME 2
The Sleeping Dragon

The epic Chinese tale of loyalty and war
in a dynamic new translation

LUO GUANZHONG

Translated by YU SUMEI
Edited by RONALD C. IVERSON

TUTTLE

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List of Main Characters

Cai Mao—brother-in-law of Liu Biao

Cao Cao (Cao Meng-de, A.D. 155–220)—prime minister to Emperor Xian, controls the real power of the state; later created Duke of Wei, Prince of Wei and posthumously, Emperor Wu of Wei Dynasty

Cao Hong—cousin of Cao Cao and senior officer under him

Cao Pi (A.D. 187–226)—second son
of Cao Cao, later first emperor (Emperor Wen) of Wei Dynasty, which he established in A.D. 220

Cao Ren—cousin of Cao Cao and senior officer under him

Cao Rui—son of Cao Pi, later Emperor Ming of Wei

Cao Shuang—son of Cao Zhen, enemy of Sima Yi

Cao Zhen—senior officer of Wei

Cao Zhi (Cao Zi-jian, A.D. 192–232)— favorite son of Cao Cao and a famed poet

Chen Deng—advisor to Lu Bu but later plots his destruction

Chen Gong—chief advisor to Lu Bu

Chen Lin—notable scholar, first served as advisor to Yuan Shao but later surrendered to Cao Cao

Chen Wu—senior officer of Wu

Cheng Pu—senior officer of Wu

Cheng Yu—advisor to Cao Cao

Deng Ai—commander of the forces of Wei after Sima Yi

Dian Wei—bodyguard to Cao Cao

Diao Chan (Sable Cicada)—singing girl at Wang Yun's house, who helps her master destroy Dong Zhuo; concubine of Lu Bu

Ding Feng—senior officer of Wu

Dong Cheng—general of Han and relative to the imperial house, who receives the secret edict from Emperor Xian to assassinate Cao Cao

Dong Zhuo—governor of Hedong, later establishes himself as prime minister of Han; set up Emperor Xian in place of his brother, Emperor Shao, in order to build his own power

Emperor Shao (Liu Bian)—son of Emperor Ling and Empress He, deposed and murdered by Dong Zhuo

Emperor Xian (Liu Xie)—brother
of Emperor Shao, a puppet ruler controlled by his ministers; deposed by Cao Pi in A.D. 220 (r. A.D. 189–220)

Empress Dowager He—mother of Emperor Shao, sister of He Jin; murdered by Dong Zhuo

Fa Zheng—Liu Zhang's official who helped Liu Bei acquire the rule of Shu

Feng Ji—advisor to Yuan Shao, enemy of Tian Feng

Gan Ning (Gan Xin-ba)—senior officer of Wu, famed for his bravery

Gao Shun—officer under Lu Bu

Gongsun Zan—patron of Liu Bei and one of the seventeen lords who join forces to wage war on Dong Zhuo; commits suicide after being destroyed by Yuan Shao

Guan Lu, famous sage

Guan Ping—adopted son of Guan Yu, killed by Sun Quan

Guan Xing—elder son of Guan Yu

Guan Yu (Guan Yun-chang, A.D.?–219)—sworn brother of Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, Lord of Hanshou, famed for his valor and rectitude; respected greatly by Cao Cao

Guo Jia (Guo Feng-xiao)—trusted advisor to Cao Cao

Guo Si—fellow rebel with Li Jue after the downfall of Dong Zhuo

Guo Tu—advisor to Yuan Shao and later to his eldest son Yuan Tan

Han Dang—senior officer of Wu

Han Sui—warrior from the northwest, sworn brother of Ma Teng

He Jin—brother of Empress Dowager He and commander of Han forces; murdered by eunuchs

Hua Tuo—famous physician who cures Zhou Tai and Guan Yu; killed by Cao Cao

Hua Xin—senior official under Cao Cao and Cao Pi, notorious for his cruelty toward Empress Fu

Huang Gai (Huang Gong-fu)—senior officer of Wu, whose false defection to Cao Cao plays a key role in the Battle of the Red Cliff

Huang Zhong (Huang Han-sheng)— veteran warrior, joins Liu Bei after the latter's seisure of Changsha

Huang Zu—commanding officer under Liu Biao

Ji Ling—commanding officer under Yuan Shu

Ji Ping—physician of Han court, killed by Cao Cao after failing to poison him

Jia Xu—resourceful strategist, advisor first to Li Jue and Guo Si, then to Zhang Xiu, and finally to Cao Cao

Jian Yong—advisor to Liu Bei

Jiang Gan—official under Cao Cao, an old friend of Zhou Yu's

Jiang Wei (Jiang Bo-yue)—successor to Zhuge Liang as commander-in-chief of Shu forces

Kan Ze—senior advisor of Wu, who delivers Huang Gai's false letter of defection to Cao Cao

Kong Rong—notable Han scholar, descendant of Confucius, Prefect of Beihai; later killed by Cao Cao for his outspokenness

Kuai Yue—advisor to Liu Biao

Lady Cai—second wife of Liu Biao, sister of Cai Mao

Lady Gan—wife of Liu Bei, mother of Liu Shan (A Dou)

Lady Liu—wife of Yuan Shao and mother of Yuan Shang

Lady Mi—wife of Liu Bei, sister of Mi Zhu and Mi Fang

Lady Sun—wife of Liu Bei and sister of Sun Quan

Li Dian—officer under Cao Cao

Li Jue—chief rebel after the downfall of Dong Zhuo

Liao Hua—officer of Shu under Guan Yu

Lin Tong—officer of Wu

Liu Bei (Liu Xuan-de, A.D. 161–223)— descendant of the imperial house, sworn brother of Guan Yu and Zhang Fei,

later Prince of Hanzhong and first ruler of the kingdom of Shu

Liu Biao (Liu Jin-sheng, A.D. 142–

208)—Prefect of Jingzhou, who gives shelter to Liu Bei and leaves in his care his two sons, Liu Qi and Liu Zong

Liu Qi—elder son of Liu Biao; hated by his stepmother Lady Cai

Liu Shan (A Dou, A.D. 207–271)—eldest son of Liu Bei, second ruler of Shu
(r. A.D. 223–263)

Liu Ye—senior advisor to Cao Cao

Liu Zhang—Governor of Yizhou, later overthrown by his kinsman Liu Bei

Liu Zong—younger son of Liu Biao; killed with his mother, Lady Cai, by Cao Cao

Lu Bu (Lu Feng-xian)—valiant warrior, adopted son first of Ding Yuan and later of Dong Zhuo, both of whom die at his hands; killed by Cao Cao

Lu Meng (Lu Zi-ming)—senior officer of Wu; succeeds Lu Su as commander-in-chief of forces

Lu Shang—chief counselor to King Wen of Zhou and his son King Wu, who founded the Zhou Dynasty

Lu Su (Lu Zi-jing)—chief advisor of Wu, successor to Zhou Yu as commander-in-chief; advocates alliance with Liu Bei against Cao Cao

Lu Xun (Lu Bo-yan)—son-in-law of Sun Ce; succeeds Lu Meng as commander-in-chief of Wu forces to foil Liu Bei's attack

Lu Zhi—Han general who commands
an imperial force in the suppression of the Yellow Turban Uprising

Ma Chao (Ma Meng-qi)—son of Ma Teng, later one of Liu Bei's Five Tiger Generals

Ma Dai—cousin of Ma Chao, officer of Shu

Ma Liang—advisor to Liu Bei, brother of Ma Su

Ma Su (Ma You-chang)—advisor to Liu Bei, younger brother of Ma Liang; put to death after the fall of Jieting

Ma Teng—Han general, loyal to the House of Han; killed by Cao Cao

Man Chong—advisor to Cao Cao, who persuades Xu Huang to submit to Cao Cao

Meng Da—good friend of Fa Zheng and Zhang Song; assists Liu Bei in conquering Shu

Mi Fang—brother of Lady Mi and Mi Zhu, who fails to rescue Guan Yu and is later killed by Liu Bei

Mi Zhu—brother of Lady Mi and Mi Fang, loyal follower of Liu Bei

Pan Zhang—senior officer under Sun Quan

Pang De—formerly serves under Ma Chao but later joins Cao Cao; killed by Guan Yu

Pang Tong (Pang Shi-yuan, or

Phoenix Fledgeling)—chief strategist in the Battle of the Red Cliff and later advisor to Liu Bei

Shen Pei—advisor to Yuan Shao, and later his youngest son Yuan Shang

Sima Yan—grandson of Sima Yi; first emperor of Jin Dynasty after forcing the abdication of Cao Huan, last emperor of Wei Dynasty

Sima Yi (Sima Zhong-da)—advisor to Cao Cao, father of Sima Zhao, who later overthrows Wei Dynasty and establishes Jin Dynasty

Sima Zhao—son of Sima Yi, father of Sima

Sun Ce (Sun Bo-fu, A.D. 175–200)— eldest son of Sun Jian, brother of Sun Quan; enlarges the territory he inherits from his father east of the Yangtze River; later assassinated

Sun Jian (Sun Wen-tai, A.D. 155–

191)—founder of Wu and father of Sun Ce and Sun Quan; killed by Liu Biao's men

Sun Qian—senior counselor to Liu Bei

Sun Quan (Sun Zhong-mou, A.D. 182–252)—second son of Sun Jian and brother of Sun Ce; succeeds them to be ruler of the land of Wu and later Emperor of Wu (r. A.D. 229–252)

Taishi Ci—valiant warrior of Wu

Tao Qian—Prefect of Xuzhou, who yields his district to Liu Bei

Tian Feng—advisor to Yuan Shao

Wang Ping—officer of Shu

Wang Yun—senior official of the Han court, who instigates the "chain" scheme to destroy Dong Zhuo, but is later killed by Li Jue and Guo Si

Wei Yan (Wei Wen-chang)—senior officer under Liu Bei, later commander of Hanzhong; distrusted by Zhuge Liang

Wen Chou—general under Yuan Shao, slain by Guan Yu

Xiahou Ba—son of Xiahou Yuan, cousin of Xiahou Dun

Xiahou Dun—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao

Xiahou Yuan—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao; later killed by Huang Zhong

Xu Chu—bodyguard of Cao Cao

Xu Huang—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao

Xu Sheng—senior officer of Wu

Xu You—advisor first to Yuan Shao and later to Cao Cao; killed by Xu Chu

Xun You—advisor to Cao Cao, nephew of Xun Yu

Xun Yu (Xun Wen-ruo)—senior advisor to Cao Cao

Yan Liang—general under Yuan Shao, slain by Guan Yu

Yang Feng—officer under Li Jue, but later leaves him to serve Emperor Xian; killed by Liu Bei

Yi Ji—advisor to Liu Biao first, but later joins Liu Bei, to whom he exposes Cai Mao's plot to harm him

Yu Fan—advisor to Sun Quan

Yu Jin—senior officer under Cao Cao

Yuan Shang—youngest son of Yuan Shao

Yuan Shao (Yuan Ben-chu, A.D.?–202)—born into a family of high-ranking officials of Han; leader of a confederacy army against Dong Zhuo; rules four northern districts but is later destroyed by Cao Cao

Yuan Shu (Yuan Gong-lu, A.D.?–199)—brother of Yuan Shao, assumes the title of emperor at Shouchun but is soon destroyed
by Cao Cao

Yuan Tan—eldest son of Yuan Shao

Yue Jin—senior officer under Cao Cao

Zhang Ba—officer under Lu Bu

Zhang Bao—son of Zhang Fei

Zhang Fei (Zhang Yi-de, A.D.?–221)— sworn brother of Liu Bei and Guan Yu; courageous warrior, fiery-tempered after drinking

Zhang He—senior officer under Yuan Shao but later joins Cao Cao

Zhang Liao (Zhang Wen-yuan)— formerly served under Lu Bu but later surrendered to Cao Cao; friend of Guan Yu

Zhang Lu—ruler of Hanzhong; later defeated by Cao Cao

Zhang Song—official of Shu, but secretly persuades Liu Bei to kill his old master and take his land

Zhang Xiu—one of the feudal lords

Zhang Zhao—chief counselor to Sun Quan

Zhao Yun (Zhao Zi-long)—warrior of unusual strength and resourcefulness; loyal follower of Liu Bei

Zhong Hui—commander of Wei

Zhong Yao—senior official of Wei

Zhou Tai—senior officer under Sun Quan

Zhou Yu (Zhou Gong-jin)—commander-in-chief of the forces of Wu, who directs the Battle of the Red Cliff against Cao Cao; rival of Zhuge Liang

Zhu Jun—Han general

Zhuge Jin—elder brother of Zhuge Liang, advisor to Sun Quan

Zhuge Ke—officer of Wu, son of Zhuge Jin

Zhuge Liang (Kongming, or Sleeping Dragon, A.D. 181–234)—hermit of Nangyang, later chief counselor to Liu Bei; his ingenious policy of uniting Wu to oppose Wei leads to the emergence of the balance of power among the three kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu; his wisdom and military skill enable Liu Bei to set up his own rule

Zhuge Zhan—son of Zhuge Liang

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Liu Bei Schemes to Capture Fancheng

Xu Shu Leaves and Recommends Zhuge Liang

In hot anger Cao Ren lost no time in marching out to avenge the loss of so much of his army. He hastily crossed the river, intending to attack Xinye and trample it in the dust.

After the victory over the two Lus, Shan Fu said to Liu Bei, "Cao Ren is now stationed at Fancheng with his army. When he hears of his losses he will try to retrieve them and come to attack us."

"What can we do to counter him?" asked Liu Bei.

"If he comes with all his force his own city will be left undefended and we can capture it in the meantime."

Liu Bei asked him how this could be done.

The advisor leaned over and whispered something in his ear. Whatever the plan was it seemed to please Liu Bei enormously, for he at once set about making necessary arrangements. Soon, scouts came to report that Cao Ren had crossed the river with a mighty army.

“Just as I guessed,” said Shan Fu.

Then he suggested Liu Bei should move out to oppose the enemy. He did as he was advised and when both sides had completed their battle formations, Zhao Yun rode to the front as champion and challenged the other side. Li Dian was sent out to accept the challenge. At about the tenth bout Li Dian, conscious that he had no chance of winning, turned back and retired to his own side. Zhao Yun pressed after him but was checked by a shower of arrows from the two wings. Then both sides called off the battle and withdrew to their own camps.

Li Dian reported to his chief that their opponents were strong and vigorous and could not be treated lightly. He advised him to retreat back to their city.

Cao Ren angrily rebuked him: “You tried to discourage the men before we started and now you have deliberately lost the battle to the enemy. You have been bought and you deserve death.”

He called in the executioners to take Li Dian out to be slain but the other officers pleaded with him and finally Li Dian was spared. However, he was transferred to the command of the rear while Cao Ren himself led the attack.

The next day amid the beating of drums the army advanced. Having drawn up his men in a special formation, Cao Ren sent a messenger over to the other side to ask if his opponent recognized his battle formation. Shan Fu went up a hill and looked over at it. Then he said to Liu Bei, “His deployment is known as the Eight Locked Gates and each gate has a name.

If you enter by any of the three gates named Birth, Scene, and Expanse you succeed; if by any of another three gates named Wound, Fear, and Break you sustain injuries. The other two gates are named Obstacle and Death, and to enter them means the end. Now, though, the eight gates are all correctly placed, there is a lack of overall control in the center and the formation can be thrown into confusion by entry from the southeast through the Gate of Birth and exit in the west through the Gate of Scene."

Therefore Liu Bei ordered the soldiers to defend well in their own formation. Then Zhao Yun, leading 500 men, rode out on his prancing steed to break the enemy's line. He burst in through the southeast, as directed by the advisor, and with great clamor and fighting, reached the center. Cao Ren made for the north but Zhao Yun, instead of following him, darted westward and got through. Then he turned around to the southeast again and attacked till Cao Ren's army was in disarray. Liu Bei gave the signal for a general advance and the enemy's defeat was severe. The beaten men retreated to their camp.

Shan Fu ordered his men not to pursue and so the army also returned.

The loss of the battle assured Cao Ren of his colleague's wisdom so he sent for him for consultation.

"They certainly have some very capable people in Liu Bei's army," said Cao Ren. "They even broke my special formation."

"My chief anxiety is about Fancheng," said Li Dian.

“I will raid their camp tonight,” said Cao Ren. “If I succeed we will decide upon what should be done next. If I fail, we will return to Fancheng.”

“No, you shouldn’t go. They will be prepared for such a raid,” said Li Dian.

“How can you expect to fight successfully when you are so full of doubts?” retorted Cao Ren angrily.

Thus he ignored his colleague’s advice and decided to raid his enemy’s camp at the second watch, with himself in command of the van and Li Dian at the rear.

Now, as Shan Fu was discussing plans with his chief a gust of wind suddenly swept up.

“This wind means that the enemy will raid on our camp tonight,” said the advisor.

“How are we going to meet it?” asked Liu Bei.

“I have already thought out the plan,” was the reply.

So he quickly arranged moves to counter the raiders. By the second watch, when Cao Ren arrived with his army, he saw fires on all sides and the camp itself was burning. He realized at once that all hope of a surprise attack was in vain and he turned to get away as quickly as possible. However, it was too late. Zhao Yun had already fallen upon him and cut his return road. Cao Ren hastened north toward the river but no sooner had he gained the bank and was looking for boats to cross than up came Zhang Fei to attack him.

By dint of great efforts and with the support of his colleague Cao Ren got into a boat, but most of his men were drowned in the river. As soon as he got to shore he bolted for the city of Fancheng. At the wall he hailed the guards to open the gate but to his great surprise he heard the rolling of drums, which was soon followed by the appearance of an officer and a body of soldiers. It was none other than the formidable Guan Yu.

"I took the city a long time ago!" shouted Guan Yu.

This was a severe shock to Cao Ren and he turned to flee. Instantly, Guan Yu came down to give chase and an even greater number of Cao Ren's men were lost. The remnant hastened toward the capital. On the way Cao Ren made inquiries and learned that it was Shan Fu who advised Liu Bei on his battle strategy.

While the defeated general had to find his way back to the capital, Liu Bei, after the great victory, entered Fancheng, where he was welcomed by the magistrate, himself a descendant of the imperial family. He invited Liu Bei to a dinner at his residence and treated him exceedingly courteously.

While at the magistrate's house, Liu Bei noticed a distinguished-looking young man and asked who he was.

"He is my nephew, Kou Feng," replied the magistrate. "His parents are dead and so he is here with me."

Liu Bei took a great liking for the lad and proposed to adopt him. The magistrate was quite pleased with the idea and so the adoption was arranged. The young man's name was

changed to Liu Feng. When Liu Bei left, he took his newly-adopted son with him. The young man was then made to bow before Guan Yu and Zhang Fei as uncles.

Guan Yu was doubtful of the wisdom of this adoption. He said, “Brother, you already have a son of your own. Why do you think it necessary to adopt another? It’ll only cause trouble later.”

“I’ll treat him as a father should and surely he’ll wait upon me as befits a son. How can there be any trouble?” replied Liu Bei.

Guan Yu was displeased. Then Liu Bei and Shan Fu had further discussions about their next move. They decided to leave Zhao Yun to guard Fancheng while the rest of the army returned to Xinye.

In the meantime, Cao Cao’s defeated general had returned. When he saw his lord, Cao Ren threw himself to the ground and, weeping and admitting his faults, he related the details of the loss.

“Well, victory or defeat is only common in a war,” said Cao Cao. “But I should like to know who mapped out the plans for Liu Bei.”

“It was Shan Fu,” said Cao Ren.

“Who is he?” asked Cao Cao.

Cheng Yu said with a smile, “This man is not called Shan Fu. When young this man was fond of sword play. Many years

ago he killed a man to avenge the wrongs of a friend. To escape he loosened his hair and muddied his face, but was caught and questioned by guards. As he would not answer any of their questions they tied him to a cart and pushed it through the streets to see if anyone would recognize him. They beat a drum to call the attention of the people. Although there were some who knew him, none dared say anything. Later, his friends managed to release him secretly and he ran away under some other name. Then he turned to study and wandered everywhere to look for great scholars. He is often in the company of the learned recluse Sima Hui. His real name is Xu Shu or Xu Yuan-zhi, and he comes from Yingchuan. Shan Fu is merely his assumed name."

"How does he compare with yourself?" asked Cao Cao.

"He is ten times more clever than me," replied Cheng Yu.

"What a pity that this able man should be in Liu Bei's service! His wings will soon grow. What is to be done?"

"Xu Shu is there now, but it will not be difficult to call him here if you want him," replied Cheng Yu.

"How can I make him come?" asked Cao Cao.

"He is noted for his filial piety towards his mother. His father died when he was still very young, leaving his mother a widow with two sons. Now his brother is also dead and his mother has no one to care for her. If you send someone to get his mother here, and tell her to write and summon her son, he will surely come."

Cao Cao was greatly pleased with his words and without delay he had the old lady brought to the capital. He treated her very well and said to her: “I hear you have an extremely talented son who is now at Xinye helping the rebel Liu Bei against the court. It is a great pity to see a jewel sinking in a mire. I want to trouble you to write a letter to call him. I will recommend him before the Emperor and he is sure to get a handsome reward.”

“What sort of man is Liu Bei?” she asked.

Cao Cao replied, “A common sort of person from Zhuojun, brazen enough to style himself as the Imperial Uncle, and so claiming some kind of connection with the House of Han. He is neither trustworthy nor virtuous. A hypocrite in essence, he is righteous in appearance but mean by nature.”

The old lady answered in a stern voice: “What nonsense you are talking! Everyone knows he is a descendant of a Han prince and so is related to the ruling house. He is courteous to his subordinates and respectful to others. He enjoys a high reputation of benevolence. All men, young or old, even cowherds and firewood cutters, know him by name. He is indeed the finest and noblest man in the country. If my son is in his service, then he has found the right master. You, under the name of a Han minister, are really nothing but a Han traitor, yet you try to slander Liu Bei and call him a rebel. You even try to induce me to make my son leave the light for darkness. Are you devoid of all sense of shame?”

As she finished speaking she picked up the inkstand to strike at Cao Cao. This so enraged him that he forgot himself and ordered the guards to take the old lady out and put her to

death. The advisor Cheng Yu, however, stopped this act of folly by pointing out to him how it would damage his reputation and enhance hers. “Besides,” he went on to say, “her death would add a keen desire for revenge in her son, who would then exert himself to assist Liu Bei. You had better keep her here so that her son’s body and thoughts may be in different places. He cannot devote all his energy to helping our enemy while his mother is here. If you keep her I think I can find a way to persuade the son to come and help you.”

So the old lady was saved. She was provided with a suitable place to live and cared for. Every day, Cheng Yu went to ask after her health, falsely claiming to be a sworn brother of her son and so entitled to wait on her as a filial son would have done. He often sent her gifts, and each gift would be accompanied with a brief note so that she had to write in reply. In this way he managed to obtain samples of her handwriting, which made it possible for him to forge a letter to her son. When he could do this without fear of detection he wrote one and sent it by the hand of a trusted person to Xinye.

When the messenger arrived there, he inquired about Shan Fu and said that he had a letter from home for him. The soldiers led him to their chief advisor, to whom he said that he was a servant at the old lady’s place and had been sent by her to bring this letter to her son. Shan Fu quickly tore it open and read:

> On your brother’s death recently I was left all alone without anyone to turn to for help. I was just lamenting over my poor lot when the prime minister sent people to inveigle me into coming to the

> capital. He says that you are a rebel and he has thrown me into confinement. However, thanks to Cheng Yu my life has been spared so far but I would only be safe if you could come and submit to him. When this reaches you, remember how I have toiled to bring you up and come at once so that you may prove yourself a filial son. Together we may find some way of escaping to our own place and avoid the grave danger that threatens me. My life hangs by a thread and I look to you to save me.

Tears gushed from his eyes as he read, and with the letter in his hand he went at once to see Liu Bei. “I am Xu Shu of Yingchuan and I have changed my name to Shan Fu to escape being caught. Some time ago I heard that Liu Biao treated true scholars well and I went to him, but after talking with him I realized that he was a man of no use so I left him very soon. I went to see my friend Sima Hui late one night and told him about this. He blamed me for not knowing whom to serve. Then he told me of you and I sang that wild song in the street to attract your attention. I was grateful that you immediately took me into your confidence and put me in a position of responsibility.

“But now my aged mother has fallen a victim of Cao Cao’s wiles. She is in prison and he threatens to do worse unless I submit to him. My mother has written to call me and I must go. It is not that I do not want to do all I can to repay your kindness, but with my dear mother a captive, I can no longer render you any service. Therefore I must leave you and hope we will meet again later.”

Liu Bei broke into loud moans when he heard that his advisor was to leave.

“The bond between mother and son is the most enduring,” he said, “and you must not worry about what your leaving may mean to me. When you have seen your venerable mother, perhaps I may again have the honor of receiving your instructions.”

Xu Shu bowed and thanked him. Then he wanted to depart at once.

“Pray stay for one more night,” entreated Liu Bei. “Let me arrange a farewell banquet tomorrow.” Xu Shu consented.

Sun Qian said to Liu Bei in private: “You should not let him go, sir, for he is a rare genius. Besides, he has been here long enough to know all our secrets. If you let him go over to Cao Cao he will be his important advisor and that will be to our detriment. You ought to keep him at all costs and not let him go by any means. When Cao Cao sees he does not come he will put his mother to death and that will make Xu Shu all the more anxious to fight against Cao Cao, for he will burn to avenge his mother’s death.”

Liu Bei said, “I cannot do that. It would be vile to cause the death of the mother so that I might retain the son’s service. And it would be sinful to keep him here, for that would be to rupture the bond between mother and son. I would rather die than commit such vile and sinful acts.”

All sighed with emotion when they learned what he had said.

Liu Bei prepared some wine and asked his advisor to a drink, but he declined.

“With my aged mother a prisoner I cannot swallow anything, not even if it were brewed from gold or distilled from jade,” said Xu Shu.

“Alas! your departure makes me feel like I’m losing both my hands,” said Liu Bei, “and even the liver of a dragon or the marrow of a phoenix would be bitter in my mouth.”

They sat facing each other and wept till dawn. A farewell banquet was arranged outside the city wall and all the officers were assembled there. Liu Bei and Xu Shu rode out side by side. At the pavilion they dismounted to drink the stirrup cup. Liu Bei lifted the goblet and said, “It is my mean fortune that separates me from you but I hope that you will serve well your new lord and fulfill your life’s mission.”

Xu Shu wept as he replied, “I am but a poor, ignorant person whom you have kindly employed and trusted. Unfortunately I have to leave you in the middle of the course, but it is really for the sake of my aged mother. Even though Cao Cao may try all manner of means to coerce me, I will never plan a single scheme for him.”

“After you are gone I will bury myself in the hills and hide in the forests,” said Liu Bei.

Xu Shu said, “I depended on a clear-thinking mind to plan for you the strategies to build an empire, but with my aged mother in danger, my mind is all confused. Even if I were here I would be of no use to you. You ought to seek some

man of supreme wisdom to help you in your great design. How can you give up so easily?"

"None of the great scholars of the day can compare with you, sir."

"How can I deserve such a praise?" said Xu Shu. "I am only a man of limited ability."

As he moved off he said to the officers that had come to see him off, "I hope you will all serve our lord well so that your names and your merits will be recorded in the country's annals. Do not be like me, a man who has left his work half done."

The officers were all deeply affected. Liu Bei could not bring himself to part with his advisor so he escorted him a little further, and yet a little further, till Xu Shu said, "I will not trouble you, my lord, to come any further. Let us say farewell here."

Liu Bei, while mounted, took Xu Shu by the hand and said, "Alas! now you leave and we will be far apart. Who knows when we will meet again?"

His tears fell like rain and Xu Shu also wept bitterly. But the last goodbyes were said and when the traveler had gone Liu Bei reined in his horse, gazing after the receding figure and watching him slowly disappear. At the last glimpse he broke into lamentation.

"He is gone! What shall I do?"

As he strained his eyes to get yet another glimpse of his advisor, a line of trees shut out the traveler from his sight and he pointed at it with his horse whip and said, “How I would like to cut down every tree in this place!”

“Why?” asked his men in surprise.

“Because they hinder me from seeing Xu Shu.”

As they were looking they suddenly saw Xu Shu galloping back.

Liu Bei said, “He is returning—can it be that he is going to stay?”

So he hastened forward to meet him and when they got near enough he cried, “This return is surely for no slight reason.”

Checking his horse, Xu Shu said, “In the turmoil of my feelings I forgot to say one word. There is a man of exceptional talents who lives in Long-zhong, only about twenty li from the city of Xiangyang. Why not go and seek him?”

“Can I trouble you to invite him to come and see me?”

“This man will not suffer being summoned; you must go to him. If he consents to assist you, then you will be as fortunate as when the Zhous got the aid of Lu Shang, or Han when Zhang Liang came to help.”

“How does he compare with yourself in wisdom and virtue?”

“With me? Well, it is like comparing a slow carthorse to a Qilin,* or a crow to a phoenix. This man often regards himself as Guan Zhong and Yue Yi but, in my opinion, he is far superior. He has the talent to measure the heavens and mete the earth; he is a man who overshadows every other in the world.”

“I would like to know his name,” said Liu Bei, rather pleased.

“He is a native of Yangdu, Langye—his double surname is Zhuge and his give name, Liang. His self-styled name is Kongming. He is the descendant of an officer in the Han army. His father was an official but died young, so he came with his uncle to Jingzhou, since Prefect Liu Biao was an old friend of his uncle’s, and so he settled down there. Then his uncle died and he, with a younger brother, Jun, took to farming in Nanyang. He often composes elegies in the style of Ode to Mount Liangfu.

“On their land was a hillock called the Sleeping Dragon, so he called himself Master Sleeping Dragon. This man is a veritable genius. You must go and visit him without delay and if he will help you, then you need have no more anxiety about achieving your aims.”

“The other day Sima Hui spoke of two men, Fulong and Fengchu, and said that if I could get one of them to help me all would be well. Is he one of the two?”

“Fengchu, or Phoenix Fledgeling, is Pang Tong; and Fulong, or Sleeping Dragon, is exactly Zhuge Liang.”

Liu Bei said excitedly, “Now at last I know who these mysterious names refer to. I little expected they were right here! But for you, sir, I would still be like a blind man.”

Later a poem was written to praise Xu Shu for his recommendation of Zhuge Liang at the time of his departure:

> Liu Bei heard that his able friend
> Must leave him with saddened heart,
> For each to the other had grown very dear,
> Both wept when they came to part.
>
> But the faithful friend then mentioned a name
> That echoed both loud and deep,
> Like a thunder clap in a springtime sky,
> And there wakened a dragon from sleep.

After he had recommended Zhuge Liang to the lord he was to serve, Xu Shu took his leave again and rode away.

Thus Liu Bei finally understood the speech of the hermit Sima Hui, and he felt as if he had regained consciousness from a drunken sleep, or awoken from a deep dream. At the head of his officers he returned to the city, where he lost no time in preparing rich gifts. He then set out with his two brothers for Nanyang to invite Zhuge Liang to serve him.

Touched by Liu Bei’s reluctance to part with him, Xu Shu had mentioned the name and retreat of his friend. Now it occurred to him that Zhuge Liang might be unwilling to play the part of helper in Liu Bei’s scheme, so he decided to pay him a visit, intending to persuade him. He therefore went to Sleeping Dragon Ridge and dismounted at his friend’s

cottage. When Zhuge Liang asked him why he had come, Xu Shu replied, “I have been in the service of Liu Bei and I wished I could continue to serve him. Unfortunately, my mother has been imprisoned by Cao Cao and she has summoned me to her. Therefore I had to leave him. At parting I recommended you to him. He will soon come to invite you and I hope you will not refuse but will consent to use your great talents to help him.”

Zhuge Liang turned angry and said, “Do you regard me as a victim offered to the altar?”

So saying he left the room with a flick of his sleeves. The guest shamefacedly retired, mounted his horse, and hastened on his way to the capital to see his mother.

> To help the lord he loved very well,
> He summoned the aid of another,
> When he took the distant homeward way,
> At the call of a loving mother.

What happens to Xu Shu in the capital will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* A mythical animal of very fast speed, similar to a deer.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Sima Hui Recommends Zhuge Liang

Liu Bei Pays Three Visits to Zhuge Liang's Cottage

After his visit to Zhuge Liang, Xu Shu hastened to the capital. When Cao Cao knew he had arrived, he sent Cheng Yu and other advisors to welcome him and so he was led first to his residence.

Cao Cao asked, “Why should a scholar of such superior wisdom as you bow the knee to Liu Bei?”

“When I was young I was a fugitive on the run. I spent some time as a wanderer and happened to pass Xinye, where I became good friends with Liu Bei. But I am much indebted to you for being merciful to my mother here.”

“Now that you have come you will be able to take care of your mother at all times. And I may have the privilege of receiving your wisdom,” replied Cao Cao.

Xu Shu then took his leave and hurried to his mother’s dwelling. Weeping with emotion he made his obeisance to her at the door of her room.

But she was greatly surprised to see him and asked, “Why are you here?”

“I was at Xinye in the service of Liu Bei when I received your letter. I came immediately.”

His mother suddenly grew very angry. Pounding the table with her fist she cried, “You shameful and degenerate son! For years you have been roaming around the world and I thought you would have improved in your learning. Why are you even worse than before? You are a student and know the books. You must then know that loyalty and filial piety are often opposed. Don’t you recognize in Cao Cao a traitor, a man who flouts his Emperor and insults his superiors? Don’t you see that Liu Bei is virtuous and upright, as all the world knows? Moreover, he is of the House of Han and when you were with him you were serving an appropriate master. Now on the strength of a scrap of forged writing, without making any inquiry, you have left the light and plunged into darkness to earn a disgraceful reputation for yourself. How very stupid you are! And I feel too ashamed to look upon you. You have defiled the good name of your forefathers. What a waste for you to be born in this world!”

The son remained bowed to the floor, not daring to lift his eyes, while his mother delivered this vilifying tirade. Even after she had finished her speech and left the room, he was still kneeling on the floor. Soon, one of the servants came out to say that the old lady had hanged herself. Startled beyond measure, Xu Shu rushed in to try to save her, but it was too late.

A eulogy was written for the old lady:

Wise Mother Xu, fair is your fame,

The history page glows with your name,
The family's renown you made.

To train your son no pains you spared,
For your own body nothing cared.

You stand sublime as a high hill
Through simple purity of heart.

Bravely you extolled Liu Bei's worth
And blamed Cao Cao for his evils.

Of blazing fire you felt no fear,
You blanched not when the sword came near,
But dreaded lest a willful son
Should dim the fame his fathers won.

Yes, Mother Xu was of one mould
With famous heroines of old,
Who never shrank from injury,
And even were content to die.

Eloquent praise, while still alive,
Was yours, and ever will survive.

Hail! Mother Xu, your memory,
While time rolls on, shall never die.

At the sight of his dead mother, Xu Shu wept so bitterly that he fainted and only recovered consciousness after a long time. When Cao Cao heard of it he sent mourning gifts, and in due

course went in person to express his condolences. Xu Shu buried her mother in the south of the capital and kept a vigil at her tomb. He consistently rejected all gifts from Cao Cao.

At that time Cao Cao was contemplating an attack on Sun Quan in the southeast. His advisor Xun Yu argued that he should wait until the weather was milder and he agreed. But he began to prepare for the war. The waters in a river were redirected to form a lake, which he called the "Training Lake," where he could accustom his men to fight on the water.

Now Liu Bei was preparing gifts for his intended visit to Zhuge Liang when his servants came to announce the arrival of a stranger of exceptionally austere appearance, wearing a lofty headdress and a wide belt.

"Could it be him?" said Liu Bei to himself. Hastily arranging his dress, he went to welcome the visitor. But the first glance showed him that it was the mountain recluse Sima Hui, also known as Water Mirror. However, Liu Bei was very glad to see him and led him into the inner hall, where he conducted the guest to the seat of honor and made his obeisance.

Liu Bei said, "Since leaving you that day in the mountains I have been overwhelmed with military affairs and so have failed to visit you as I should. Now that you have condescended to come and see me I feel that my ardent wishes have been gratified."

"I hear Xu Shu is here. I have come expressly to see him," replied the visitor bluntly.

“He has lately left for the capital. A messenger came with a letter from his mother telling him of her imprisonment by Cao Cao.”

“Then he must have fallen into Cao Cao’s trap!” said Sima Hui. “I have always known his mother to be a very noble woman, and even if she was imprisoned by Cao Cao she would not summon her son like that. That letter was undoubtedly a forgery. If the son did not go, the mother would be safe; if he went, she would be a dead woman.”

“But how could it be?” asked Liu Bei, astonished.

“She is a woman of the highest principles, who will be greatly mortified seeing her son under such circumstances.”

Liu Bei said, “Just as your friend was leaving he recommended to me a certain Zhuge Liang of Nanyang. What do you think of him?”

Sima Hui smiled and said, “If Xu Shu wanted to go, he could just leave. But why should he want to drag Zhuge Liang out to shed his heart’s blood?”

“Why do you say that, sir?” asked Liu Bei.

He replied: “Zhuge Liang has four closest friends—Cui Zhou-ping, Shi Guang-yuan, Meng Gong-wei, and Xu Shu. These four are devoted to the perfection of separate things. Only Zhuge Liang is able to perceive their overall meaning. He used to sit with his hands about his knees reciting poetry, and then, pointing to his companions, he would say, ‘You, gentlemen, could be governors or prefects in official life.’

“When they asked him what his ambition was he would only smile and refuse to answer. He often compares himself with the great scholars Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. No one could truly measure his talents.”

“Yingchuan is truly a wonderful place that produces so many able men!” said Liu Bei.

“Well, in the old days the astrologer, Yin Kui, had predicted that as the stars clustered thick over this district, there would emerge many wise men here.”

Guan Yu was present at the time and heard Zhuge Liang so highly praised. He said, “Guan Zhong and Yue Yi were famous men in the period of Spring and Autumn and their merits greatly surpassed the rest of mankind. Is it not too conceited for Zhuge Liang to compare himself with these two?”

“In my opinion he should not be compared with these two, but rather with two others,” said Sima Hui.

“Who are these two?’ asked Guan Yu.

“One of them is Lu Shang, who laid the foundations of the Zhou Dynasty so firmly that it lasted 800 years, and the other is Zhang Liang, who made Han glorious for four centuries.”

Before the surprise caused by this startling statement had subsided, the visitor walked down the steps and took his leave. Liu Bei would have kept him longer if he could, but he would not stay. As he stalked proudly away he looked up at the sky and said, laughing heartily: “Though the Sleeping

Dragon has found his lord, he has not been born at the right time. It's a pity."

"What a wise hermit!" sighed Liu Bei in admiration.

The next day, the three brothers set out to find the abode of the wise man. When they were near the spot they saw several peasants hoeing in a field and as they worked they sang:

The earth is a chequered board,

And the sky hangs over all,
Under it men are contending,
Some rise, but many more fall.
For those who succeed, 'tis well,
But for those who go under, rough.
There's a dozing dragon nearby,
But his sleep isn't deep enough.

They stopped to listen to the song and, calling one of the peasants, asked who composed it.

"It was made by Master Sleeping Dragon," said the laborer.

"Where does he live?"

"South of this hill there is a ridge called The Sleeping Dragon and close by is a sparse wood. In it stands a modest cottage. That is where Master Zhuge takes his repose."

Liu Bei thanked him and the party rode on. Soon they came to the ridge, most aptly named, for indeed it lay wrapped in an atmosphere of calm beauty.

A poem has been composed to describe it:

Not far from Xiangyang's ancient walls

There stands clear cut against the sky,
A lofty ridge, and at its foot
A gentle stream goes gliding by.

The hills, curving upward to join
The scudding clouds, arrest the eye.
Gurgling water falls from the top
Meets the rocks as its journey stops.

There, like a sleeping dragon coiled,
Or phoenix hid among thick pines,*
You see, secure from prying eyes,
A hut, reed-built on rustic lines.

The rough-joined doors, pushed by the wind,
Swing idly open and disclose
The greatest genius of the world
Enjoying still his calm repose.

The air is full of woodland scents,
Around are hedgerows trim and green,
Close-growing intercrossed bamboo
Replace the painted doorway screen.

But look within and books you see
By every couch, near every chair;

And you may guess that common men
Are very seldom welcomed there.

The hut seems far from human ken,
So far, one might expect to find
Wild forest denizens there, trained
To serve in place of human kind.

Outside, a hoary crane† might stand
As warden of the outer gate;

Within, a long-armed gibbon come
To offer fruit upon a plate.

But enter—there refinement reigns;
Brocaded silk the lutes protect,

And burnished weapons on the walls

The green of pines outside reflect.
For he who dwells within that hut
Is talented beyond compare,
Although he lives the simple life
And farming seems his only care.

He waits until the thunderous call
Rouses him from his blissful dreams;
Then will he come and at his word
Peace over all the land shall reign.

Liu Bei soon arrived at the abode of the recluse, dismounted, and knocked at the rough door of the cottage. A youth appeared and asked what he wanted.

Liu Bei replied, “I am Liu Bei, General of the Han Empire, Lord of Yicheng, Prefect of Yuzhou and uncle of the Emperor. I have come to salute the Master.”

“I cannot remember so many titles,” said the lad.

“Then simply say that Liu Bei has come to visit him.”

“The master left early this morning.”

“Where has he gone?”

“His movements are uncertain. I do not know where he has gone.”

“When will he return?”

“That also is uncertain. Perhaps in three or five days, perhaps in more than ten.”

His disappointment was keen.

“Let’s go back since he’s not at home,” said Zhang Fei.

“Wait a little time,” said Liu Bei.

“It’s better to return,” said Guan Yu. “We can send someone to find out when he’ll be back.”

Liu Bei agreed. “When the Master returns, tell him that Liu Bei has been to visit him,” he said to the boy.

They mounted and left. On the way Liu Bei stopped and looked back at the surroundings of the little cottage in the wood. The hills, though not high, were picturesque; the streams, though not deep, were clear like crystal; the plain, though not extensive, was smooth and level; and the woods, though not big, were luxuriant with trees. It was a place where gibbons lived in harmony with cranes and pines vied with bamboo in verdure. It was a scene to linger upon.

While Liu Bei stood enjoying the view, he saw a figure coming down a mountain path. It was a handsome man with a lofty bearing. He wore a comfortable-looking headdress and a black robe. He used a staff to help him down the steep path.

"Surely that is he!" said Liu Bei.

He dismounted and walked over to greet the stranger, whom he saluted deferentially. "Are you not Master Sleeping Dragon, sir?" he asked.

"Who are you, General?" inquired the stranger.

"I am Liu Bei."

"I am not Zhuge Liang, but I am a friend of his. My name is Cui Zhou-ping."

"Long have I heard of your great name! I am very pleased to meet you, sir," replied Liu Bei. "And now I wonder if I may ask you to sit where we are for I desire very much your instruction."

So the two men sat down facing each other on some rocks in the wood and the two brothers ranged themselves by Liu Bei's side.

Cui Zhou-ping spoke first. "General, for what reason do you wish to see Zhuge Liang?"

Liu Bei replied, "The empire is in confusion and troubles gather everywhere. I want your friend to tell me how to restore order."

"You, sir, wish to address the problem of the present disorder, which shows you are a kindly man but, since the oldest times, order and disorder have alternated. From the day that the founder of the Han dynasty first staged the uprising to the time when he eventually overthrew the wicked rule of Qin, it was a process in which order eventually replaced disorder. Two centuries of tranquillity ensued till in the reigns of the emperors Ai and Ping came Wang Mang's usurpation and disorder took over again. Soon, Emperor Guang-wu restored the Han Dynasty and order once more prevailed over chaos. We have had another two centuries of tranquillity, and the time of trouble and war is due. At present, order is just being replaced by disorder, so it is not yet time to aim for peace. You, sir, wish to get Zhuge Liang to regulate times and seasons, to repair the cosmos; but I fear the task is indeed difficult and to attempt it would be a vain expenditure of mental energy. You know well that he who goes with the laws of Heaven leads an easy life and he who acts contrary toils all the year round. One cannot escape one's lot—one cannot evade fate."

“Sir, your insight is indeed deep and your words profound,” replied Liu Bei, “but I am a scion of the House of Han and must try to uphold its power. Dare I talk of succumbing to the inevitable and fate?”

Cui Zhou-ping said, “I am but a simple denizen of the mountain wilds and not fit to discuss the affairs of the state. At your request just now I ventured to speak my mind, perhaps quite wrongly.”

“Sir, I am grateful for your instruction. But do you know where Zhuge Liang has gone?”

“I have also come to see him and I do not know where he is,” said Cui Zhou-ping.

“Could I ask you, sir, to come with me to my humble district?”

“Well, I am too dilatory, too fond of leisure and ease, and no longer have any ambitions. Maybe I will see you another time.”

And with these words he saluted and left.

The three brothers also mounted and started homeward. Presently Zhang Fei said, “We didn’t find Zhuge Liang and yet had to listen to the wild ravings of this so-called scholar. That is the whole outcome of this journey.”

“His words were also those of a deep thinker,” replied Liu Bei.

Several days after their return to Xinye, Liu Bei sent someone to find out whether Zhuge Liang had returned and the messenger came back to say that he had. Therefore Liu Bei prepared for another visit. Again Zhang Fei showed his irritation by remarking, "Why must you go hunting after this villager? Just send for him."

"Silence!" reproached Liu Bei. "The great master Mencius said, 'To wish to see the sage without following his way is like barring the door when you want him to enter.' Zhuge Liang is the greatest sage of the day—how can I summon him?"

So Liu Bei rode again to make his visit, followed by his two brothers as before. It was winter and the weather was exceedingly cold—the sky was overcast with dark clouds. Before they had gone far, a piercing wind swept up and large snowflakes began to fall, soon turning the mountains and trees into an ethereal world of jade and silver.

"It's very cold and the earth is frozen hard, not the kind of weather even for warfare," said Zhang Fei. "Yet we're going all this way to see a useless person. What's the sense of it? Let's rather get back to Xinye to avoid the cold."

Liu Bei replied, "I'm set upon proving my zeal to Zhuge Liang, but if you, brothers, don't like the cold, you can return."

"I defy even death—do you think I'll mind the cold? I'm only afraid that you might be wasting your energy," said Zhang Fei.

“Say no more,” said Liu Bei, and they traveled on.

When they drew near the cottage they heard singing from a roadside inn and stopped to listen. This was the song:

Although possessed of talent rare,

This man has made no name;
Alas! the day is breaking late
That is to show his fame.

Oh friends you know the tale;

The aged man* constrained to leave
His cottage by the sea,
To follow in a prince’s train
His counselor to be.

Eight hundred feudal chieftains met
Who came with one accord;

The happy omen, that white fish,
That leapt the boat aboard;

The gory field in distant wilds,
Whence flowed a crimson tide,
And him acknowledged chief in war
Whose virtues none denied;

That Gaoyang rustic,† fond of wine,
Who left his native place
And went to serve so faithfully
The man‡ of showy nose;

And one who spoke of ruling chiefs
In tones so bold and free;

But sitting at the festive board
Was full of courtesy;

And one, ‘twas he who laid in dust
Walled cities near four score—

But men of doughty deeds like these
On earth are seen no more.

Yet these two have perished,
Their deeds no longer remembered.
So whoever in this world now
Will talk about heroes of renown?

The song ended, then another man tapped the table and sang:

We had a famous emperor,[§]

Who drew his shining sword,
Cleansed all the land within the seas
And made himself its lord.

In time his son succeeded him,

And so from son to son

The lordship passed, held firm until
Four hundred years had run.

Then dawned a day of weaklier sons,
The fiery virtue failed,
Then ministers betrayed their trust,
vile court intrigues prevailed.

The omens came; a serpent black*
Coiled on the dragon throne,
While in the Hall of Jade
Unholy halos shone.

Now bandits swarm in all the land
And ambitious lords strive,
The common people, sore perplexed,
Can nowhere find relief.

Let's drown our sorrows in the cup,
Be happy while we may,
Let those who wish run after fame
And try to make a name.

The two men laughed aloud and clapped their hands as the second singer ceased. Liu Bei thought that his longed-for sage might be one of the two, so he dismounted and entered the inn. He saw the two merry-makers sitting opposite each other at a table. One was pale with a long beard, while the other had a strikingly refined face. Liu Bei saluted them and asked, "Which of you is Master Sleeping Dragon?"

"Who are you, sir?" asked the long-bearded one. "What business have you with Sleeping Dragon?"

"I am Liu Bei. I want to consult him on how to restore tranquillity to the world."

“Well, neither of us is your man, but we are friends of his. My name is Shi Guang-yuan and my friend here is Meng Gong-wei.”

“I have long known you both by reputation,” said Liu Bei happily. “I am indeed fortunate to meet you in this way. Would you not come to the Sleeping Dragon’s retreat and talk with me for a while? I have horses here ready to take you there.”

“We idle folk of the wilds know nothing of the affairs of state. Do not trouble to ask, please. Pray mount again and go your way in search of the Sleeping Dragon.”

So Liu Bei and his brothers remounted and went on with the journey. At the little cottage, they dismounted and tapped at the door. The same lad answered the knock and Liu Bei asked him whether the master had returned.

“He is in his room reading,” said the boy.

Joyful indeed was Liu Bei as he followed the lad in. In front of the middle door he saw a pair of scrolls on which were written the following two lines:

By purity manifest the inclination;

By repose affect the distant.

As he was looking at this couplet he heard someone reciting a poem in a soft voice, so he stopped by the door to peep in. He saw a young man sitting close to a charcoal brazier, hugging his knees while he sang:

The phoenix flies high, ah me!

And only will perch on a plane tree.

The scholar is hid, ah me!

Till his lord appears he can patient be.

He tills his fields, ah me!

He is well-content and he loves his cot,
He awaits his day, ah me!

And seeks comfort in his lute and his books.

As the song ended Liu Bei advanced and saluted the young man. He said, “Master, long have I yearned to meet you, but have been prevented by ill fortune. Lately Xu Shu recommended you to me and I hastened to your dwelling, only to come away disappointed. This time I have braved the elements and come again. Indeed my reward is great, for I am fortunate enough to see you.”

The young man hastily returned the salute and said: “General, you must be that Liu Bei of Yuzhou who wishes to see my brother.”

“Then, sir, you are not Master Sleeping Dragon?” said Liu Bei, starting back.

“I am his younger brother, Zhuge Jun. There are three of us: my eldest brother Zhuge Jin is now with Sun Quan in the southeast as a secretary. Zhuge Liang is my second brother.”

“Is your brother at home?”

“Only yesterday he went on a jaunt with Cui Zhouping.”

“Where have they gone?’

“Who can say? They may take a boat and sail away among the lakes, or go to visit monks in some remote mountain temple, or wander off to visit a friend in some far away village, or sit in some cave with a lute or a chess-board. Their comings and goings are uncertain and nobody has any clues.”

“How very unlucky I am! Twice have I failed to meet the great sage.”

“Please sit down for a few moments and let me offer you some tea.”

“Brother, since the master’s not here, I think you should remount and go,” urged Zhang Fei.

“Well, I’m here already, how can I just leave without a word?” said Liu Bei.

Then turning to his host he continued, “I was told that your worthy brother is very much skilled in military strategy and studies works on warfare every day. Do you know anything about that?’

“I do not know.”

“What’s the use of asking him?” grumbled Zhang Fei. “The wind and snow are getting worse—we ought to go back.”

Liu Bei turned on him angrily and told him to say no more.

The young man said, “Since my brother is absent I dare not detain you any longer. Let my brother return your call later.”

“Please do not take that trouble. In a few days I will come again. But I would like to borrow some paper and brush so that I could leave a note to show your worthy brother my sincerity.”

His young host produced the well-known “four treasures” (ink, ink-stand, brush, and paper) of the scholar and Liu Bei, thawing out the frozen brush between his lips, spread the thin sheet of paper and wrote:

“I, Liu Bei, have long admired your fame. I have visited your dwelling twice, but to my great disappointment I have not had the pleasure of meeting you. As a distant relative of the Emperor, I have undeservedly enjoyed fame and rank. When I see the ruling house weakening, the foundation of the state crumbling away, numerous lords creating confusion in the country, and an evil cabal behaving unseemly toward the Emperor, my heart and guts are torn to shreds. But although I have a real desire to assist, I am deficient in the necessary skills. Therefore I have turned to you, wise master, for help, trusting in your kindness, graciousness, loyalty, and righteousness. If you would only use your talent, equal to that of Lu Shang, and perform great deeds as Zhang Liang did for the founder of Han, then the empire would be happy and the throne would be secure.

“I am leaving you this brief note now and after purifying myself with fasting and fragrant baths, I will come again to

bow before your honored presence and receive enlightenment."

Having written the letter and given it to the host, Liu Bei politely took his leave, inwardly quite disappointed at this second failure. As he was mounting, he saw the serving lad waving to someone outside the hedge and heard him call out, "The old master is here."

Liu Bei looked and then saw a figure seated on a donkey riding leisurely over a bridge.

The rider wore a cap with long flaps down to his shoulders and was clad in a fox fur robe. A youth followed him bearing a jar of wine. As he came through the snow he hummed a song:

> This eve, the sky is overcast,
>
> The north wind comes with icy blast,
> Light snowflakes whirl about until
> A white pall covers dale and hill.
> Perhaps above the topmost sky
> White dragons strive for mastery,
> Numerous scales from their forms riven
> Are scattered o'er the world wind-driven.
> Amid the storm there jogs along
> A simple soul who croons a song
> "Oh poor plum trees, the gale doth tear
> Your blossoms off and leave you bare.

"Here at last is Master Sleeping Dragon," thought Liu Bei, hastily slipping out of the saddle. He saluted the rider as he

drew near and said: “Master, it is hard to make way against this cold wind. I have been waiting long.”

The rider got off his donkey and returned his salute, while Zhuge Jun interjected from behind: “This is not my brother—it is his father-in-law, Huang Cheng-yan.”

Liu Bei said, “I chanced to hear the poem you were reciting—it is superb.”

Cheng-yen replied, “It is a little poem I read in my son-in-law’s house and I recalled it as I crossed the bridge and saw the plum blossoms in the hedge. I did not know it would catch your ear, noble sir.”

“Have you seen your son-in-law lately?” asked Liu Bei.

“I have come especially to see him.”

At this Liu Bei bade him farewell and went on his way. The snowstorm was very grievous to bear, but worse than the storm was the grief in his heart as he looked back at Sleeping Dragon Ridge.

One winter’s day through snow and wind

Liu Bei rode forth the sage to find;

Alas! his journey was in vain,

And sadly turned he home again.

The stream stood still beneath the bridge
A sheet of ice draped rock and ridge,
His steed, benumbed with biting cold,
Crawled on as he was stiff and old.

The snowflakes on the rider's head
Were like pear blossoms newly shed,
Or like the willow catkins light
They brushed his cheeks in headlong flight.
He checked his steed and looked around,
The snow lay thick on trees and mounds,
The Sleeping Dragon Ridge lay white
A hill of silver, glistening bright.

They returned to Xinye.

Time slipped away very fast and before long spring was near. Then Liu Bei had an auspicious day selected for another journey in search of the sage. The day being fixed he fasted for three days, took a bath and changed his clothes, ready to make the visit. His two brothers viewed the preparations with disapproval and went in together to dissuade him from taking the trip.

The sage and the fighting man disagree,

A warrior despises humility.

What they would say to their brother will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* In Chinese culture the pine tree, as well as the bamboo, often symbolizes loftiness and uprightness.

† In Chinese culture the crane is often a symbol of longevity.

* Referring to Lu Shang, chief advisor to the founder of the Zhou Dynasty.

† Referring to Li Yi-ji, advisor to the founder of the Han Dynasty.

‡ Referring to Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty, who was known to have a big nose.

§ Referring to Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty.

* See Chapter One for details of the event.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Zhuge Liang Outlines Plans for Three Kingdoms

Sun Quan Attacks Huang Zu to Avenge His Father

Undaunted by two unsuccessful visits to the sage, Liu Bei prepared for a third visit. His two brothers disapproved of this and went to dissuade him. Guan Yu said, “Brother, you’ve already sought him twice, surely this is showing too much deference. I don’t believe in this fame of his for learning. I think he’s avoiding you because he’s afraid of being found out. Why hold so obstinately to this idea?”

“You’re wrong, brother. In the old days, Duke Huan of Qi wanted to see the Hermit of the Eastern Hills, but he had to pay five visits before he got to see his face. And now I desire to see the great sage. How can I be less deferential?”

“I think you’re being deceived,” said Zhang Fei. “How can this rustic be such a marvel of wisdom? You needn’t go this time. If he won’t come, I’ll bring him here with a hemp rope.”

Liu Bei said angrily, “Have you forgotten the visit by King Wen* to Lu Shang, the old man of the Eastern Sea? If a king could show such deference to a wise man, how can you talk so rudely about the sage? I don’t want you to go this time, so we two shall go without you.”

“If you’re both going, how can I hold back?” said Zhang Fei.

“But if you go, you must behave.”

Zhang Fei promised he would not forget himself and the three set out. When they were half a li from the little cottage, Liu Bei dismounted, deciding to show his respect by approaching the house on foot. Very soon he met Zhuge Jun, whom he saluted at once, inquiring whether his brother was at home.

“He returned yesterday evening. You can see him today, General.”

As he said this he departed in a carefree way.

“Fortune favors me this time,” said Liu Bei, “I’m going to see the master.”

“That was a rude fellow,” said Zhang Fei. “It wouldn’t have hurt him to conduct us to the house. Why did he go off like that?”

“Each one has his own business,” said his brother. “What power do we have over him?”

Soon the three got to the gate of the cottage and knocked. The serving lad came out to inquire and Liu Bei said most politely, “May I trouble you, gentle lad, to inform the Master that Liu Bei wishes to pay his respects to him.”

“The Master is at home, but he is asleep.”

“In that case, do not announce me yet. I will wait.”

He told his two brothers to wait at the door and he himself entered very quietly. There on the couch was the master he sought, lying asleep on his back. Liu Bei stood beneath the steps with joined hands at a respectful distance.

Quite some time passed and still the sleeper did not wake up. The two brothers, who had grown impatient, also came in. Zhang Fei was greatly annoyed at seeing his revered eldest brother respectfully standing by while the sage slept.

"What an arrogant fellow this master is!" he cried. "There is our brother standing below the steps, yet he pretends to be asleep. I'll go to the back of the cottage and set it on fire. See if that will rouse him."

"No, no, you mustn't do anything of the kind," whispered Guan Yu, and then Liu Bei told them to go out again.

Just then he noticed that the master moved. He turned over as though about to rise, but instead, he faced the wall and again fell asleep. The lad wanted to rouse his master but Liu Bei would not let him be disturbed and he waited yet another weary hour. Only then did Zhuge Liang wake up, reciting to himself the lines:

> Can any know what fate is his?
>
> Yet have I felt throughout my life,
> The day will come at last to quit
> The calm retreat for toil and strife.

As he finished he turned to the lad and asked, "Has any visitor come?"

“General Liu, uncle of the Emperor, is here,” said the boy. “He has been waiting some time.”

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?” he said, rising from the couch. “I’ll go in and dress.”

He rose and went inside. Again, there was a long wait before he reappeared, his clothing properly arranged, to receive his visitor.

Liu Bei saw coming toward him a very superior-looking man. He was taller than himself and his face was so refined that it resembled jade. He wore a silk head-wrap and a long crane-white gown. He moved with an air of perfect ease so that he seemed to be more like a god than a mortal.

Liu Bei bowed and said, “I am one of the last descendants of the Han family, an ignorant person from Zhuojun. I have long known your fame, which has indeed thundered in my ear. Twice I have come to visit you, but without success. The last I came here I left a note with my signature on your writing table. I wonder if you have read it.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “I am but a native of Nanyang, a dilatory person by temperament yet you have come time and again to visit me. I am very sorry I have been away on both occasions.”

After the exchange of these courteous remarks and the proper greetings, the two men sat down in their seats as host and guest and the serving lad brought tea.

Then Zhuge Liang said, “From your letter I know that you grieve for both the people and the state. Unfortunately I am young and untalented, not the right person to provide answers to your questions.”

Liu Bei replied, “Sima Hui and Xu Shu have both spoken very highly of you. How could it be that their words were vain? I earnestly hope, sir, that you will not despise me for my worthlessness but will condescend to instruct me.”

“The two men you just mentioned are very profound scholars while I am but a mere farmer. How dare I talk about state affairs? Those two misled you when they recommended me. Why do you reject the valuable jade for a worthless pebble?”

“But your superior abilities are unrivaled throughout the country. How can you be content to allow time to pass while you idle away your life in these secluded haunts? I entreat you, sir, to think of the interests of the entire people and remove my crass ignorance by bestowing instruction upon me.”

“But what is your ambition, General?” asked Zhuge Liang with a smile.

Liu Bei moved his seat nearer to his host and said, “The Hans are sinking and evil ministers have usurped their authority. Weak as I am, I desire to restore justice to the country. But hampered by my ignorance and shallowness, I have been unable to achieve anything. Only you, sir, can enlighten me and lead me out of the difficult situation. What a great fortune it will be to me!”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Bold and ambitious men have arisen one after another in various parts of the country since the days of the arch rebel Dong Zhuo. In the north, there is Cao Cao, who was not so powerful as Yuan Shao, but he overcame him by seizing the favorable moment and using his men properly. Now he is all powerful, ruling not only an immense army but, through his control of the court, various feudal lords as well. It is impossible for you to oppose him. In the east, Sun Quan has inherited the rulership of his territory from his father and brother. His position may not appear too secure, but he can rely on popular support. You can use him as an ally but not an enemy.

“Jingzhou (ruled by Liu Biao) is the place where you should implement your great plan. In the north the city rests on the two rivers, Han and Mian, through which its influence reaches the south; in the east it borders the land of Wu and in the west it is linked to the territories of the ancient states of Ba and Shu. This city is the very place where decisive battles have to be won. It is not that its present ruler cannot hold the city, but that Heaven has virtually made it yours, in spite of your reluctance to seize it.

“Yizhou (held by Liu Zhang), is also an important place, fertile and extensive, a land favored by Heaven and through which the founder of Han obtained his empire. Its ruler Liu Zhang is ignorant and weak. The people there are affluent and the district prosperous, but he does not know how to hold, and the able men of the district are yearning for an enlightened ruler. Now you are a scion of the Han House, well-known throughout the land as trusty and righteous. You have attracted real heroes to your side and you greatly desire to win the support of the wise. If you get possession of these two

cities, if in the west you strike harmony with the Rong tribes while in the south win over Yi and Yue, and if externally you seek an alliance with Sun Quan, and internally maintain good administration, you can await confidently the day when Heaven will offer you the desired opportunity. Then you can delegate a worthy general to lead the army of Jingzhou to conquer the northeast, while you take command of the forces of Yizhou for an expedition to the northwest—surely you will find the warmest welcome prepared for you by the people. This being done, your great task will be accomplished and the House of the Hans will be restored. This is the plan I devise for you but its implementation depends on you, General."

He paused and told the lad to bring out a map. As this was unrolled Zhuge Liang went on: "There you see the fifty four divisions of West Chuan. Should you wish to establish your own rule you must allow Cao Cao to enjoy the bounty of Heaven in the north and permit Sun Quan to benefit from territorial advantage in the south; whereas you, General, can profit from your popularity with the people. Take Jingzhou first as your home base, then expand westward to West Chuan to set up your own rule. Thus a situation of tripartite confrontation will emerge. When you are firmly established you can lay your plans for the attainment of the whole empire."

As Zhuge Liang ended his speech, Liu Bei left his place to thank him, saying, "Your words, sir, render everything so clear that it seems to me the clouds are swept aside and I can see the blue sky. But Jingzhou belongs to Liu Biao, my kinsman, and Yizhou to another kinsman; I could hardly take their land from them."

“I have studied the stars and I know Liu Biao is not long for this world, while the other is not the sort of man to endure. Both places will certainly fall to you.”

Liu Bei bowed his head in gratitude. This speech alone proved that Zhuge Liang, who had so far lived in seclusion in his cottage, already foresaw the break of the empire into three divisions. Indeed, throughout all the ages none has ever equaled his intelligence and understanding of the situation!

Behold, when Liu Bei frets that he is weak,

Then “Sleeping Dragon” is not far to seek;

When he desires to know how things will hap’,

The master, smiling, shows him on the map.

“Though I am of small repute and scanty virtue,” said Liu Bei, “I hope, sir, you will not despise me for my worthlessness, but will leave this retreat to help me. I will assuredly listen most reverently to your words.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “I have long been contented with my life on the farm and cherished my leisure. I fear I cannot obey your command.”

Liu Bei wept. “If you will not, sir, what will become of the people?”

Tears rolled down unchecked upon the lapel and sleeves of his robe. This proved to Zhuge Liang the sincerity of his

desire and at last he said, “General, if you insist I will render what trifling service I can.”

Liu Bei was overjoyed. He called in Guan Yu and Zhang Fei to pay their respects to Zhuge Liang and presented the gifts he had prepared. Zhuge Liang firmly refused to accept them.

“These are not gifts to engage your services, but mere proof of my regard,” said Liu Bei.

Then the presents were accepted. They all remained that night at the farm. The next day, Zhuge Jun returned and his brother said to him: “General Liu has come thrice to see me and I feel I must go and help him. Keep up the farm in my absence and do not let the fields lie wasted. As soon as my work is accomplished, I will certainly return.”

A poem was written to portray this:

Then, turning from his humble home,

He thought of peaceful days to come,
When he should take the homeward way

And ne’er beyond the valley stray.

But duty kept him in the west,
And there he found his place of rest.

An old poem may be quoted here:

The Founder of Han seized his gleaming blade

And at Mangdang the blood of the white snake flowed.

He conquered Qin, destroyed Chu, and entered Xiangyang.
After two centuries of rule the line was near broken,
But Guangwu, the great, restored the glory at Luoyang.
And his offspring occupied the throne
Till decay began in the days of Huan and Ling,
Then Emperor Xian removed the capital to Xuchang.

And, within the four seas, all was confusion.

Bold spirits started up in fierce contention.

Cao Cao seized the favorable moment
And the imperial authority passed into his hands,
While the Suns made to themselves
A glorious heritage east of the river,
Solitary and poor, Liu Bei wandered from place to place,
Till he found a haven in Xinye.

Sorely distressed he was at the sorrows of the people,
But the Sleeping Dragon conceived a noble ambition.
Within his breast were remarkable plans
Of great things to be accomplished by force of arms.

Then, because of the parting words of Xu Shu,
And by the three repeated visits to his retreat,
The great hero found and knew his mentor,
When at the age of but thrice nine years
He turned from his books, put aside his lute
And left the peaceful fields he had loved,
Under his guidance Jingzhou was taken,
And the land of West Chuan conquered,
He unrolled great schemes, as one all knowing
In speech, he went to and fro in the land,
The sound of war drums rolled loud from his tongue,
The words from his heart stirred one to the utmost depths,
The dragon pranced, the tiger glared,
And peace was brought to the land.

Through all the ages his fame will never decay.

After taking leave of the younger brother, Liu Bei and his followers left for Xinye, with Zhuge Liang as companion. When they took up their abode there, Zhuge Liang was treated as a respected master, eating at the same table and sleeping on the same couch with Liu Bei. They spent whole days conversing over the affairs of the state.

Zhuge Liang said, “Cao Cao is training his men for naval service and so certainly intends to invade the country south of the river. We can send our spies to ascertain what he is really doing.”

So spies were dispatched to gather information.

Now after Sun Quan had succeeded his brother to rule his territory he welcomed men of ability from every side to aid him. He even built guest-houses in Wu and directed two officials to receive and entertain all those who came. And year by year they flocked in, one recommending another. Among them were Kan Ze and Yan Jun. All these scholars were treated with great deference.

Some able warriors also joined his service, among whom were Lu Meng and Lu Xun. Thus Sun Quan obtained the assistance of many men of ability in both civil and military affairs, and all seemed to go well with him.

In the seventh year of Jian An, Cao Cao had annihilated Yuan Shao. Then he sent an envoy to see Sun Quan, ordering him to send his son to court to serve in the retinue of the Emperor. Sun Quan, however, hesitated whether he should comply with this request, and the matter was the subject of much discussion. His mother, Lady Wu, sent for Zhou Yu and Zhang Zhao and asked them for their advice.

Zhang Zhao said, “Cao Cao’s intention is to keep your son in court as a hostage so that he can have a hold on us. But if we do not comply with this request he will very likely attack us and that will be disastrous.”

Zhou Yu said, “General, you are blessed with the heritage of your father and brother and have under your rule the vast population of six districts. You also possess a large army and ample supplies. Officers and soldiers are all ready to do your bidding. So why should you be compelled to send a hostage to any man? To send a hostage is to be forced into alliance with Cao Cao, and to carry out his behest, whatever they may

be. Then you will be in his power. I think it would be better not to send your son there, but rather to wait and see how things develop and then design plans to counter them."

"That is also my opinion," said Lady Wu.

So Sun Quan dismissed the messenger and did not send his son. Cao Cao resented this and thereafter nourished a desire to destroy the Suns. However, at that time he was fully occupied with the war in the north so no expedition to the south had been sent.

Late in the eighth year of the reign of Jian An, Sun Quan led his army to attack Huang Zu and the two sides fought on the Yangtze River. Sun Quan was successful in several battles. Then one of his officers, Ling Cao, at the head of a fleet of light vessels, sailed up the river and broke into Xiakou but was killed by an arrow from one of the enemy officers called Gan Ning. His son, Ling Tong, then only fifteen years of age, fought desperately to retrieve his father's corpse. Seeing that the war was going against him, Sun Quan turned back to his own territory.

Now Sun Quan's younger brother, Sun Yi, was Prefect of Danyang. He was a hard man and given to drink and, in his cups, would order severe floggings of his men. Two of his officers, Gui Lan and Dai Yuan, hated him and intended to assassinate him. They took into their confidence a guard of the prefect's, called Bian Hong, and the three plotted to kill their master. Shortly, there was a great assembly of officials at Danyang and the prefect prepared to give a big banquet to entertain them.

Sun Yi's wife, Lady Xu, was skilled in divination and on the day of the great banquet she cast a most inauspicious lot. Therefore she begged her husband to stay away from the assembly. But he was obstinate and went anyway. The faithless guard followed his master out after the gathering dispersed in the evening and stabbed him to death. The two prime conspirators at once seized their accomplice on the charge of murdering the prefect and beheaded him in the market place. Then they went to Sun Yi's residence, which they plundered. Gui Lan was taken with the beauty of the dead prefect's wife and told her that as he had avenged the death of her husband she must go with him, or he would slay her. She pleaded that it was too soon after her husband's demise to think of re-marriage but promised to be his after the mourning ceremony.

She thus obtained a respite, which she utilized to send secretly for two of her husband's trusted officers, Sun Gao and Fu Ying. They came and she tearfully told her tale.

"My husband had great faith in you. Now Gui Lan and Dai Yuan have plotted his death, and have laid the crime on Bian Hong. They have plundered my house and carried off my servants and maids. Worse than this, Gui Lan also insists that I be his wife. To gain time I have pretended to accept his proposal. You must now send the news to my husband's brother and at the same time we must think of a scheme to slay these two miscreants and avenge this wrong. I will never forget your kindness in this life or the next."

And she bowed before them. They also wept and said, "We were much attached to our master and now that he has come

to an untimely end we must avenge him. We will certainly do as you ask us to do."

So they sent a trusty messenger to break the sad news to Sun Quan. On the day of the memorial service for her husband the lady called in her two friends and hid them in a secret chamber. Then the ceremony was performed in the great hall. When it was over, she took off her mourning garb, bathed and perfumed herself, and assumed an expression of joy, laughing and talking as usual. When Gui Lan heard of all this he rejoiced in his heart, thinking of the pleasure that was to be his.

When night came she sent a maid to call Gui Lan to her residence, where she entertained him with wine. When he was quite intoxicated, she suggested that they should retire and led him to the chamber where her friends were waiting. He was so pleased that he followed without the least hesitation. As soon as she entered the room she called out, "Where are you, generals?" Out rushed the two men, and the drunken man, incapable of any resistance, was instantly killed.

Then she invited Dai Yuan to supper and he was slain in similar fashion. After that, she sent people to the houses of her enemies and slew all their family members. Having avenged her husband's death, she resumed her mourning garb and the heads of the two men were placed as a sacrifice before the coffin of her husband.

Very soon Sun Quan himself came with an army, and hearing the story of the deeds of the two officers from the widow, he rewarded them with promotion and put them in charge of Danyang. When he left he took the widow with him and

arranged to let her pass the remainder of her days at his house. All those who heard of her brave conduct were loud in praise of her virtue:

> Full of resource and virtuous, few in the world are like her,
> Guilefully wrought she and compassed the death of the lusty assassins,
> Faithless officials submit and loyal ones die,
> None can compare with the heroine of East Wu.

As time went by the brigands that had troubled the region had all been suppressed and a large fleet of more than seven thousand keels were in the Yangtze ready for service. Sun Quan appointed Zhou Yu to be commander-in-chief.

In the winter of the twelfth year of the reign of Jian An, Lady Wu, feeling her end approaching, called to her bedside the two advisors Zhou Yu and Zhang Zhao and said: "I came of a family in Wu. As our parents died in early life, my younger brother and I emigrated to Yue. Later I married into this family and bore my husband four sons. When Ce was born, I dreamed of the moon falling into my bosom and when it was time for Quan, I dreamed of the sun dropping into my breast. These omens were interpreted by a soothsayer as signs of the greatness that would be theirs. Unfortunately Ce died young, but Quan succeeded him and I pray you will both assist him so that I may die in peace."

And to her son she said, "These two you are to treat as your teachers and never should you neglect your duty. My younger sister and I were both married to your father, and so she is also a mother to you and you are to serve her after I am gone,

as you now serve me. And you must treat your sister with affection and find a good husband for her."

These were her last words and very soon she died. Sun Quan wept bitterly in sorrow. Then followed the mourning and her burial, but these are of no concern to us here.

The following year Sun Quan began to think of an attack upon Huang Zu again. Zhang Zhao objected, saying that the army should not move during the period of mourning. However, Zhou Yu said that vengeance should not be postponed on that account and it could not wait one year. Sun Quan vacillated between the two opposing opinions and could not decide.

As he was hesitating, Lu Meng, commander of the north region, came in to see him with news. Lu Meng said, "While I was guarding the Longqiu Gorge one of Huang Zu's officers, Gan Ning by name, came to surrender. I questioned him about his reason for submission and he told me everything about himself. He is a native of Linjiang and his other name is Xing-ba. He is a powerful man of great strength and is also known to be something of a scholar. In his youth he was fond of wandering about as a knight-errant. Once he assembled a band of outlaws with whom he plundered rivers and lakes, terrorizing everybody. He wore a bell at his waist and at the sound of this bell people fled and hid themselves from his sight. He fitted his boats with sails of West Chuan brocade and people called him the 'Pirate with Sails of Silk.'

"Later he reformed. He and his band went to Liu Biao, but they left him when they saw he would never accomplish anything. Then they wanted to come and serve under your

banner, but were detained by Huang Zu at Xiakou. Remember last time when we were attacking Huang Zu, it was this man who helped our enemy to recover Xiakou—yet he was not treated well. Even though the commander-in-chief, Su Fei, recommended him several times for promotion, Huang Zu refused, saying that he was unsuited for any high positions as he was no more than a pirate.

"So Gan Ning became a disappointed and resentful man. The commander knew his heart and he invited him to a wine party at his house. He said to Gan Ning, 'I have put your name forward many times but our chief says he has no place suitable for you. However, time slips away and man has but a very short life. One must make the most of it. I will recommend you to be magistrate of Zhu, and you must decide for yourself whether to stay or leave.'

"So Gan Ning was able to get away from Xiakou and would have come to you then, but he feared that he would not be welcomed, since he had assisted Huang Zu and killed Ling Cao. I told him you were always ready to welcome able men and would harbor no resentment for former offenses. After all, everyone is bound to do his best for his master and he was only doing what was expected of him then. He would come with alacrity if he only felt sure of a welcome. I pray you will decide whether he is to stay or not."

This was good news for Sun Quan and he said, "With his help I could destroy Huang Zu." Then he told Lu Meng to bring Gan Ning to see him.

When he had paid his obeisance, Sun Quan said to him, "I am very pleased with your coming and I bear no resentment

against you. Please have no doubts on that score. I hope you can advise me on how to destroy Huang Zu."

Gan Ning replied, "Han is taking its last breath and Cao Cao will sooner or later assume authority. Then he is sure to attempt to absorb the country as far down as the river unless he is opposed. Liu Biao prepares nothing for the future and his sons are quite unfitted to succeed him. You should lay your plans to oust him at once before Cao Cao comes. First attack Huang Zu, who is getting old and only interested in exploiting his subordinates and his people, so that he is hated by everyone. He is totally unprepared for a fight and his army is undisciplined. He will fall at the first blow. After he is gone, you can move westward to control the Chu passes and then proceed to conquer the regions of Ba and Shu. Then you will be securely established."

"Your advice is most valuable," said Sun Quan.

He made his preparations. Zhou Yu was appointed commander-in-chief; Lu Meng was van leader; Tong Xi and Gan Ning were sub-commanders. Sun Quan himself commanded the main army of 100,000 men.

Spies reported the news to Huang Zu, who hurriedly called his men together for consultation. Then he placed Su Fei in primary command and two officers as van leaders. He prepared two squadrons of ships, on which were placed strong bows and stiff crossbows to the number of more than 2,000. These were secured to heavy hawsers so that they formed a barrier in the river.

At the approach of the men of Wu, drums beat and the archers began to shoot. Soon arrows and bolts thickened the air, forcing back the invaders, who withdrew till several li of water lay between them and the defenders.

"At this stage there is no turning back for us," said Gan Ning to his colleague.

So they chose a hundred light craft and placed picked men on them, fifty to a boat. Twenty were for rowing the boats and thirty to fight. These latter were armored swordsmen. Careless of the enemy's missiles, these boats advanced, got to the defenders' fleet, and cut the hawsers of their ships so that they drifted on the water in confusion. Gan Ning leaped upon one boat and killed one of the two commanding officers. The other hastened to flee for the shore.

Seeing this, Lu Meng jumped into a small boat and rowed straight into the enemy ships, setting them on fire. When his opponent had nearly reached the bank, Lu Meng recklessly went after him, got ahead, and struck him full in the breast so that he fell.

Before long Su Fei came along the bank with reinforcements, but it was too late—the armies of Wu had already landed and there was no hope of repelling them. Su Fei fled into the open country but was captured and made prisoner. He was taken to Sun Quan, who ordered him to be put into a cage-cart and held till Huang Zu should be captured. Then he would execute the pair together. The attack pressed—day and night they worked to capture Xiakou.

He sees his ships cut loose and burned,

By the silk-sailed pirate he once spurned.

The fate of Huang Zu will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* Ruler of the house of Zhou, whose son later became founder of the West Zhou Dynasty (1046–841 B.C.).

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

At Jingzhou Liu Qi Thrice Begs for Advice

At Bowang Zhuge Liang Directs His First Battle

Now Sun Quan fought hard to take Xiakou. When Huang Zu recognized that he was beaten and could not maintain his position, he abandoned the city of Jiangxia and took the road to Jingzhou. Gan Ning, foreseeing this, had laid an ambush outside the east gate. A short while later, the fugitive, with a small following, burst out of the gate. However, he had not yet gone far when he found his road blocked.

From horseback, Huang Zu said, “I treated you well in the past, why do you now press me so hard?”

Gan Ning angrily retorted, “I did good service for you and yet you treated me as a pirate. Now what have you got to say?”

There was nothing to be said, and Huang Zu turned his horse to escape. But Gan Ning, thrusting aside his men, dashed forward to pursue him. Just then he heard shouting in his rear and saw Cheng Pu coming up. Fearing lest this other pursuer should overtake him and compete for the merit he desired for himself, Gan Ning fitted an arrow to his bow and shot at the fugitive. Huang Zu was hit and fell from his steed. Then Gan Ning cut off his head. After this, he joined Cheng Pu and the

two returned, bearing the ghastly trophy to their master. Sun Quan ordered them to place it in a box, to be taken back home and offered as a sacrifice at the altar in memory of his father.

The battle being won, Sun Quan rewarded his officers and men very liberally and Gan Ning in particular was promoted to a high rank. Next he discussed with his followers about the advisability of leaving part of his force to hold Jiangxia. But his advisor, Zhang Zhao, said it was useless to try to hold an isolated city and he suggested going back and preparing for a possible attack from Liu Biao, who would surely revenge the death of Huang Zu.

"We will certainly defeat him as his army will be tired out after a long expedition," he continued. "Then we can push home the attack and capture his districts."

Sun Quan saw the advice was wise so he gave up the city and led his army back to the east.

Now Su Fei was still confined, but he secretly got someone to ask Gan Ning to save him. Gan Ning told the messenger that he would not forget to plead mercy for him, even if he had said nothing.

When the army got back Sun Quan gave orders for Su Fei's execution so that his head might be offered as sacrifice with that of Huang Zu. Then Gan Ning went in to his lord and said in tears: "If it had not been for Su Fei, my bones would have been rotting in some ditch. How then could I have rendered service under your banner? Now I know he deserves death, but I cannot forget his kindness to me and I am willing to

return to you the honors you have bestowed on me as payment for his crime."

Sun Quan replied, "Since he once showed kindness to you, I will pardon him for your sake. But what if he runs away?"

"If he were pardoned he would be immeasurably grateful and would not dream of escaping. If he should, then I will offer my life in exchange."

So the condemned man escaped death and only Huang Zu's head was offered as sacrifice. After the sacrificial ceremony was over a great banquet was spread in celebration of the victory. As the festivities progressed, suddenly one of the guests burst into loud lamentation, drew his sword, and rushed upon Gan Ning, who hastily rose and defended himself with the chair on which he had been sitting. Sun Quan, surprised, looked at the assailant and saw it was Ling Tong, whose father had been killed by Gan Ning. The son was now burning for revenge.

Hastily leaving his place, Sun Quan checked the angry young man. "He did slay your noble father," said Sun Quan, "but at that time he was serving his lord and was bound to exert himself to the utmost. But now that you two are under one flag you must not recall an old injury. I hope you will forget this for my sake."

Ling Tong struck his head upon the floor and cried, "But how can I not avenge this? It is a blood feud and we cannot both live under the same sky."

The other guests also intervened, beseeching the young man to forgo his revenge, and at last he ceased from his murderous intention. But he sat glaring wrathfully at his enemy.

That very day Gan Ning was dispatched with 5,000 men and a hundred ships to guard Xiakou, where he was beyond the reach of his enemy's wrath. Then Sun Quan promoted Ling Tong to appease him and the young man had to acquiesce, although hatred still burned in his heart.

From then on Sun Quan enlarged his fleet and sent officers to guard various points of the riverbanks. His uncle was placed in command at Wuhui and he himself, with a large army, camped at Caisang. Zhou Yu, the commander-in-chief of the forces, was on Poyang Lake training the navy in general preparations for defense and attack.

Here our story will digress to follow the adventures of Liu Bei. From his spies he had tidings of the war and learned of the death of Huang Zu, so he consulted Zhuge Liang as to what he should do. While they were discussing the matter, there arrived a messenger from Liu Biao, asking Liu Bei to go to see him. Zhuge Liang said, "This call is to consult you about avenging Huang Zu. I will go with you and good plans will evolve as the circumstances direct."

Leaving Guan Yu to guard Xinye, Liu Bei set forth, taking Zhang Fei at the head of 500 soldiers as his escort. On the way he asked his advisor what he should say to Liu Biao. Zhuge Liang said, "First, you must thank him for having saved you from the plot against you at Xiangyang. But if he asks you to undertake an expedition against Sun Quan, you

must not agree. Say you have to return to Xinye to put your army in good order."

Bearing this admonition in mind, Liu Bei came to Jingzhou with his followers and found lodging in the guesthouse. Zhang Fei and the soldiers camped outside the city, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang went in to see Liu Biao, and after the customary salutations, Liu Bei apologized for his conduct at Xiangyang.

Liu Biao said: "Worthy brother, I know you were the victim of a vile plot and at that time I would have put Cai Mao to death if there had not been so wide a pleading for mercy. I hope you don't blame me for that."

"General Cai had little to do with it—I think it was his subordinates' doing," replied Liu Bei.

Liu Biao said, "Jiangxia is lost and Huang Zu is dead, as you know. So I have asked you to come and discuss measures of vengeance."

"Huang Zu was harsh and cruel so he could not use his men in the proper way; that was the real cause of his fall. But have you reflected what Cao Cao might do in the north if we attack the south?"

"I'm getting old and weak and unable to manage affairs properly—will you aid me, brother? After I'm gone you'll be head of this district."

"Why do you say this, brother? How can I be equal to such an important task?"

At this Zhuge Liang looked meaningfully at Liu Bei, who then continued, “But give me a little time to think of some good plan.”

He took his leave. When they had reached their lodging, Zhuge Liang asked, “Why did you decline his offer of the district?”

“He has always been most kind and courteous. I couldn’t bear to take advantage of his weakness.”

“A kindly and gracious lord indeed,” sighed Zhuge Liang.

As they were talking the elder son of Liu Biao was announced and Liu Bei welcomed him in. The young man, Liu Qi by name, bowed and then began to weep. “My stepmother hates me and my very life is in danger. Can’t you save me, uncle?”

“My worthy nephew, this is a family affair. You shouldn’t come to me.”

Zhuge Liang, who was present, smiled. Liu Bei turned to him for help.

“This is a family affair—I cannot be involved,” replied Zhuge Liang.

The young man soon left and when Liu Bei was seeing him out he whispered, “I’ll get Zhuge Liang to return your call and you can talk to him.” Then he whispered something in his ear.

Liu Qi thanked him and left. The next day, when the call was to be made, Liu Bei pretended to be suffering from stomach ache and made that an excuse to send Zhuge Liang alone on the visit. So the advisor went to Liu Qi's house and was conducted into the inner hall by the young host. When tea was brought to them, Liu Qi said: "I am an object of my stepmother's dislike—can you advise me what to do?"

"As a mere guest I can hardly have anything to do with your own 'flesh and bone' matters. If I did, and the story got abroad, much harm might ensue."

With this he rose to take leave. But Liu Qi was unwilling to let him go. He said, "Since you have taken the trouble to come, you cannot mean to go away so soon."

He led his visitor into a private chamber and had wine brought in. While they drank he repeated his previous plea and begged Zhuge Liang to teach him how to avoid being harmed by his stepmother, who would not tolerate his existence.

"It is not the sort of thing I can advise on," replied Zhuge Liang, as he rose for the second time to take leave.

"Well, it is all right if you will not reply, sir. But why leave so early?"

So Zhuge Liang once more seated himself and Liu Qi said, "I have an ancient book that I would like to show you." And he led his visitor to a small building.

“Where is the book?” asked Zhuge Liang when they had got there.

Instead of answering Liu Qi bowed to him and said in tears, “My stepmother cannot bear me and my life is in danger. Oh, sir, will you not say a word to save me?”

Zhuge Liang flushed and rose to go away. But he found the ladder by which they had mounted had been removed. Again Liu Qi begged for some advice: “You were afraid lest what you advised me might get abroad. Is that why you kept silent? Here we are, between earth and sky, and what you say will come out of your mouth and go directly into my ear. No other soul can hear. Now you can tell me what to do.”

“As the saying goes, ‘Do not sow dissension among relatives,’” said Zhuge Liang. “How can I scheme on your behalf?”

“Then my life is indeed in danger,” said the young man. “I will die at your feet.”

So saying, he pulled out a dagger and threatened to commit suicide.

Zhuge Liang checked him. “There is a way,” he said.

“Please tell me.”

“Have you not heard of the story of the two brothers, Shen Sheng and Chong Er?* Shen Sheng stayed at home and died, while his brother went away and lived. Now that Huang Zu is

gone and no one is guarding Jiangxia, why not ask to be sent there to hold it? Then you will be out of harms way."

Liu Qi thanked him again and again. Then he called his people to restore the ladder and he escorted Zhuge Liang down.

Zhuge Liang returned and related to Liu Bei the whole story, which pleased him very much. The young man soon acted on Zhuge Liang's advice, but his father would not at first consent to let him go. To settle his doubts he consulted Liu Bei, who said, "Jiangxia is important and your son is the most suitable man to guard it. You must let him go. Then the southeast will be defended by your son and I will look after the northeast."

"I hear that Cao Cao has been training a naval force," said Liu Biao. "I'm afraid he intends to attack us. We must be on our guard."

"I know all about it—have no fears," said Liu Bei.

He took his leave and went home while Liu Qi received command of 3,000 men and went to guard Jiangxia.

At this time Cao Cao had abolished the three high offices of the government and exercised their functions himself. He appointed as his secretaries, Mao Jie, Cui Yan, and Sima Yi, the last of whom was a grandson of Sima Jun, and son of Sima Fang. Thus he was firmly established on the civil side.

He then called his military officers to a council to discuss an expedition against the south. Xiahou Dun spoke first, "Liu

Bei is drilling his army at Xinye and is a source of danger. He should be destroyed."

Cao Cao was of the same opinion so he appointed Xiahou Dun commander of an army of 100,000 men to leave for Bowang, from where he could observe Liu Bei's movements in Xinye. Four other officers were assigned to assist him.

However, the advisor Xun Yu was opposed to this. He said, "Liu Bei is a resourceful warrior and he has lately gained Zhuge Liang as his advisor. We must be cautious."

Xiahou Dun retorted, "Liu Bei is a mean rat. I will certainly take him prisoner."

"Do not despise him, General," said Xu Shu. "Now he has Zhuge Liang to help him, he is like a tiger who has grown wings."

Cao Cao asked, "Who is this Zhuge Liang?"

"He is also called 'Master Sleeping Dragon.' He is a perfect genius and is so brilliantly talented that he can compare with gods or spirits, the greatest marvel of the age. Do not despise him."

"How does he stand compared with you?" asked Cao Cao.

"How dare I compare with him? I am a mere glowworm spark, whereas he is the glory of the full moon," replied Xu Shu.

“You are spreading a myth,” replied Xiahou Dun. “To my mind, this Zhuge Liang is of no account and not worth thinking about. If I do not take him and his master prisoners in the first battle, then I will submit my head to you.”

“Send me news of your victory as soon as possible to put my heart at ease,” said Cao Cao.

Xiahou Dun, greatly encouraged, took his leave and soon departed for the expedition.

The advent of Zhuge Liang and the deference shown him did not please Liu Bei’s sworn brothers, who complained to him: “Zhuge Liang is quite young. How can he have any real learning or talent? You’re treating him much too well. And we haven’t seen any evidence of his skill.”

Liu Bei replied, “You don’t know his worth. To me it’s like the fish getting back to the water. Say no more about this, brothers.”

They withdrew, silent but dissatisfied. One day a man presented Liu Bei with a yak’s tail and he put it in his cap as an ornament. Zhuge Liang came in and noticed it at once. “Then you have forgotten all about your ambition, my lord—you are just going to attend to this sort of trifle,” he remarked coldly.

Liu Bei flung his cap to the floor immediately. “I was trying to forget my worries with this,” he explained.

“How do you think you stand compared with Cao Cao?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“He is stronger.”

“Your army amounts to only a few thousand and if his army comes to attack, how are you going to deal with it?”

“That’s exactly what I’m worrying about—but I can see no way.”

“You should recruit men at once and I will train them. Then we will be able to oppose him.”

So recruiting began and 3,000 were enlisted. Zhuge Liang set about drilling them diligently.

Soon they heard that Xiahou Dun was leading a large army to attack them. When he heard this, Zhang Fei said to his brother, Guan Yu: “We’ll get this Zhuge Liang to go and fight him.”

Just at that moment they were summoned to their brother, who asked them for their advice.

“Why not send ‘water’ to oppose him, brother?” mocked Zhang Fei.

“For strategy I rely on Zhuge Liang—but for action I depend on you, brothers. Are you going to fail me?”

They went out and Zhuge Liang was called. “I fear your brothers will not obey me,” said Zhuge Liang. “If I am to direct the campaign, you must lend me your sword and seal of authority.”

So Liu Bei gave him both. Armed with these ensigns of power, Zhuge Liang summoned the officers to receive orders.

Zhang Fei said to Guan Yu, “Let’s go and see how he deploys the troops.”

When all were assembled, Zhuge Liang said, “On the left of Bowang are hills and on the right, a forest. There we will lay ambushes. Guan Yu, you will go to the hill with a thousand men. When the enemy comes, keep quiet and let them pass without fighting. I am sure their baggage and provisions will be at the back of the column. Then, when you see a flame in the south, come out and burn their supplies. Zhang Fei, you will go to the valley behind the forest. When you see the fire in the south, go to the old storage depot at Bowang and burn that. Guan Ping and Liu Feng, you two are to take 500 men each, prepare combustibles, and wait on separate sides of Bowang slope. The enemy will arrive at around the first watch and then start the blaze.”

Then he sent a messenger to call Zhao Yun back from Fancheng. He would be put in the lead of the army, but he was to lose, not win. And Liu Bei was to take a thousand men and command the reserve force.

In conclusion Zhuge Liang said, “See that each one does what he is ordered to do and let there be no mistakes.”

Then Guan Yu said, “All of us are to go out and meet the enemy, but I have not yet heard what you are going to do.”

“I am going to guard the city.”

Zhang Fei burst into laughter. “We are all to go out to the bloody battle and you are to stay at home. How very comfortable!”

“Here is the sword and here is the seal,” replied the strategist, displaying the emblems of authority. “Disobedience of orders will be punished by death.”

Liu Bei said, “Don’t you understand that the plans elaborated in a little chamber will determine victories thousands of li away? Don’t disobey the command, brothers.”

Zhang Fei went out smiling cynically.

Guan Yu remarked, “Let’s see if his strategies work or not. If he should fail, we can shame him.”

The two brothers left. None of the officers knew how good a strategist Zhuge Liang was and though they obeyed the orders, they were not without doubts and misgivings.

Zhuge Liang said to Liu Bei, “You can now lead your thousand men to camp by the hills. The enemy will arrive tomorrow evening. Then you are to abandon the camp and retreat till the fire signal is seen. Then you should turn back and attack with all your might. The two Mi brothers and I will guard the city with the remaining five hundred soldiers.”

In the city he asked Sun Qian and Jian Yong to prepare banquets to celebrate the victory and also get ready the books to record meritorious services. Liu Bei noted all these preparations with not a little misgiving in his heart.

In due course, Cao Cao's army reached Bowang. Xiahou Dun put half of the force, composed of the veterans, in the front for the main attack and the other half to guard the baggage. Thus they marched in two divisions. The season was fall and a chilly wind began to blow.

They pressed forward. Presently, they saw a cloud of dust ahead of them and Xiahou Dun ordered the ranks to spread out. From the guide he learned that the place was called Bowang slope and behind it was Luo stream. Then he rode to the front, leaving Yu Jin and Li Dian to guard their position on two sides.

Suddenly he began to laugh. When asked about the cause of his merriment, he replied, "I'm laughing at Xu Shu, who praised Zhuge Liang to the very skies as if he were more than human. But now that I see how he has placed his men and the quality of his vanguard, it seems to me that he is sending dogs or sheep to fight against tigers and leopards. I bragged a little before the prime minister when I said I would take him and Liu Bei prisoners, but now I see I'm going to manage it."

Then he rode forward at full speed. Zhao Yun came forth to meet him and Xiahou Dun shouted, "You stupid followers of Liu Bei! You are like wraiths clinging to the devil."

This angered Zhao Yun and a combat began, but in a little time Zhao Yun turned and retreated as if he was defeated. Xiahou Dun pressed after him and kept up the chase for some ten li. Then Zhao Yun suddenly turned again and offered to fight—but only to retreat again after a few passes.

Seeing this rather suspicious behavior of Zhao Yun's, one of Xiahou Dun's subordinates rode up to his chief and urged him to be cautious, for he feared Zhao Yun was trying to lead him to an ambush.

"With such antagonists as these I should not fear a score of ambushes," replied Xiahou Dun. And so he ignored the warning and pressed forward eagerly.

Just as he reached the slope he heard the roar of a bomb and out came Liu Bei to attack. "Here is your ambush," said Xiahou Dun, laughing. "I swear I will get to Xinye this evening!"

He urged his men forward and his opponents retreated as he advanced.

As evening came on, the sky was overcast with thick clouds and there was no sign of the moon. The wind that had started to blow early in the day then increased its force. Nevertheless, Xiahou Dun still urged his men to pursue the retreating foe. His two assistant officers came to a narrow part of the road, with thick reeds and rushes all around them.

"Those who underestimate the enemy are sure to suffer defeat," said Li Dian to Yu Jin. "Here in the south the roads are narrow, and streams and hills are everywhere. The woods are dense with trees. If the enemy should resort to fire we'd be lost."

"That's right," replied Yu Jin. "I'll go and warn the general. You tell the rear force to halt."

Li Dian then reined in his horse and shouted at the top of his voice to halt those coming forward, but it was not possible to check the movement of an onrushing army.

Yu Jin, on the other hand, rode forward to the front and shouted, “Please halt, General!” Xiahou Dun saw him coming up and asked him what the matter was. Yu Jin told him of the state of the country and reminded him of the danger of fire. Only then did Xiahou Dun realize the seriousness of the situation. He at once ordered his men to stop advancing, But before he could finish speaking there arose loud shouting from behind. Immediately, great tongues of flame shot up here and there. Fanned by the strong wind, these spread very quickly and soon the fire was in “the four corners and the eight sides.”

Cao Cao’s troops were thrown into extreme confusion and many were trampled down by their own men. Countless soldiers perished. At this point Zhao Yun turned his forces to smite them and Xiahou Dun dashed through the fire and smoke to escape.

Seeing that things were going very badly Li Dian turned to get back to Bowang, but fell upon a body of men in the way, led by Guan Yu. He dashed into them and managed to force a way through. His colleague Yu Jin saw that the supplies were being destroyed and there was nothing left to guard, so he fled along a bypath. Two other officers who came to try to save the supplies met Zhang Fei—one of them was slain at once but the other escaped. The battle lasted till the next morning and the countryside was strewn with corpses and drenched with blood.

The armies met on Bowang slope

And Zhuge Liang fought with fire;
A perfect strategist, he bent
All men to his desire.

But poor Cao Cao, his enemy,
He trembled in his shoes
Before the man, who'd never fought,
Yet he could armies use.

Xiahou Dun drew up the battered remnants of his army and led them back to the capital.

Zhuge Liang collected his army and as Guan Yu and Zhang Fei rode homeward they said to each other that the new strategist was a real hero. Soon they saw coming toward them a light carriage in which was seated none other than the admirable advisor and they both dismounted and bowed before him. Then the other officers also returned. The spoils were distributed among the officers and men and all marched back to Xinye, where the populace lined the roads to welcome them. "We survived this time," cried the people. "It is all because you have acquired the assistance of a wise advisor."

When Zhuge Liang got back to town, he said to his master: "Xiahou Dun has been driven off, but Cao Cao will certainly come with a stronger force."

"And what can we do?" asked Liu Bei.

"I have a plan to drive him off," said Zhuge Liang.

No time for rest yet for horses or men;

Plans are sought again to dodge where one can.

Zhuge Liang's plan to defeat Cao Cao will be revealed in the next chapter.

Footnote

* Two sons of Duke Xian of Jing in the Spring and Autumn Period.

CHAPTER FORTY

Lady Cai Plans to Submit Jingzhou to Cao Cao

Zhuge Liang Burns Xinye

When Liu Bei asked how his advisor hoped to repel Cao Cao, Zhuge Liang replied, “Xinye is a small city and unsuitable for a long occupation. Liu Biao is ill and failing fast, so this is the time to capture his district and use it as a base where we may be safe against Cao Cao.”

“Your plan, though a good one, is not feasible. I am much indebted to Liu Biao for his kindness and I cannot bear to be so ungrateful to him.”

“If you do not take this opportunity you will regret it ever after,” said Zhuge Liang.

“I would rather perish than do what is wrong.”

“We will discuss it later,” replied Zhuge Liang.

When Xiahou Dun reached the capital he went to his master in bonds and bowed to the ground, pleading guilty for the defeat. But his master forgave him and let him tell his tale. He said, “I was victim of Zhuge Liang’s evil tricks—he assaulted us with fire.”

“As a soldier from your youth you should have known that fire was a likely weapon in narrow roads.”

“Li Dian and Yu Jin did remind me. How much I regret it now!”

Cao Cao rewarded the two officers who had warned their leader.

“Liu Bei is a menace to our existence and I think he must be quickly destroyed,” said Xiahou Dun.

“He is one of my anxieties,” replied Cao Cao. “Sun Quan is the other. The rest do not count. I will take this chance to sweep the south clean.”

Then orders were issued to prepare an army of 500,000 men in five divisions. Each had two leaders, except the fifth, which Cao Cao himself commanded. The van was commanded by Xu Chu. A date in the seventh month of the thirteenth year of Jian An was chosen for the army to start the march south.

However, Kong Rong voiced his opposition to the expedition. He said, “Liu Bei and Liu Biao are both of the Imperial House and should not be attacked without serious reasons. Sun Quan, with his six districts, is as powerful as a crouching tiger and, with the Yangtze as his defense, he is very secure. If you undertake this unjustifiable expedition, sir, I fear you will forfeit the respect of the country.”

“All three of them are disobedient officials—how can I fail to punish them?” replied Cao Cao angrily.

Then he dismissed Kong Rong from his presence. Presently he gave formal orders that he would put to death anyone who attempted to remonstrate with him on the subject of his expedition.

Kong Rong went out sadly. Casting his eyes up to Heaven, he sighed: “Where is the chance of success when the inhumane assaults the humane? He is sure to be defeated.”

One of the subordinates of the official Chi Lu, whom Kong Rong had always treated with contempt, happened to hear this remark and told his patron, who carried the tale to Cao Cao. He also added that Kong Rong habitually spoke disrespectfully of the prime minister and had been very friendly with Mi Heng, who used to compare Kong Rong to Confucius and say, “Confucius is not dead”—to which Kong Rong would reply, “Yan Hui* has risen again.”

“In fact,” he continued, “he had encouraged Mi Heng to hurl those insults at you, sir.”

Chi Lu’s tale angered Cao Cao, who ordered his guards to arrest the talented Kong Rong.

Now Kong Rong had two sons, both young, who were sitting at home playing weiqi (a kind of chess), when one of their servants ran in and said, “Your father has just been carried offfor execution—why do you not run away?’

The two young men replied, “When the nest is pulled down can the eggs be left unbroken?”

At that moment, guards came and carried away the whole household. The two youths were beheaded and the father's corpse was exposed in the street.

Zhi Xi, a friend of Kong Rong's, came to weep over the corpse. This public exhibition of sympathy rekindled Cao Cao's anger and he wanted to punish it with death. However, this additional cruelty was prevented by the advisor Xun Yu, who said, "You should not slay a righteous man who came to mourn over his friend's corpse. He had often warned Kong Rong of the danger of his uncompromising honesty."

Zhi Xi then collected the remains of the father and sons and buried them. A poem was written to praise Kong Rong:

Kong Rong, who dwelt on the north sea shore,

A noble reputation bore;

With him all guests warm welcome found,
And ceaselessly the wine went round.

For skill in letters he was famed,
In speech, he dukes and princes shamed,
Historians his merits tell,
Recorders say that he did well.

After wreaking his wrath on Kong Rong, Cao Cao issued the order for the five divisions of his army to start on the expedition. Xun Yu was left in command of the capital.

At about this time Liu Biao became seriously ill and he summoned Liu Bei to his chamber. He went, accompanied by

his two brothers and Zhuge Liang. Liu Biao said, “The disease has attacked my very vitals and my time is short. I want to leave my sons to your guardianship. Neither of them seems to be fit to succeed in my place, and I pray you, brother, to administer the district after my death.”

Liu Bei wept and said, “I will do my utmost to help my nephews and will never cherish any other design for myself.”

At this moment came the news of the imminent invasion by Cao Cao. Liu Bei, taking hasty leave of his kinsman, returned to his own place. The evil tidings aggravated the sick man’s condition and he began to prepare for death. In his testament he appointed Liu Bei the guardian of his elder son Liu Qi, who was to succeed him as ruler of the prefecture.

This arrangement greatly angered his wife Lady Cai. She closed the inner doors against all and told her brother, Cai Mao, and another man, Zhang Yun, to guard the outer gates.

The heir was at Jiangxia and he came to make filial inquiries as soon as he learned about his father’s serious condition. But Cai Mao refused him admittance, saying: “Your father sent you to guard Jiangxia, which is a grave responsibility. You should by no means quit the place without orders. What if it was attacked by Sun Quan? If your father sees you he will be very angry and it will make him worse. That would be most undutiful and you should return to your post at once.”

For some time Liu Qi stood outside the gate, crying bitterly. As waiting seemed futile he returned to his position. Meanwhile, his father’s condition deteriorated rapidly. He anxiously looked for his elder son but hardly did he know the

reason why the young man did not appear. One day in the eighth month he uttered loud cries and then passed away.

When the Yuans were lords of the north,

And Biao held the bank of the river,
It seemed, so strong were they both,
That they would endure for ever.

But the women folk troubled their states,
And, meddling, confusion made;

It was mournful indeed to see
How quickly their houses decayed.

So the prefect died. Then the widow and her partizans took counsel together and forged a testament conferring the lordship of Jingzhou on the second son, Liu Zong, before they informed the others of his death.

The lad was then only fourteen years of age but quite clever of mind, so he assembled the officials and said, “My father has passed away. However, my elder brother is at Jiangxia and what is more, our uncle is at Xinye. You have made me lord, but if my brother and uncle come here with an army to punish me for usurping the lordship, what explanation can I offer?’

Before the others could reply an advisor named Li Gui rose and said, “You are absolutely right, Master Zong. You must now hasten to break the sad news of our lord’s death to your brother and ask him to come and take charge of the city. Also call upon Liu Bei to come and assist in the administration.

Then we will be able to resist our enemies both in the north and the south. This is the best plan."

Cai Mao at once shouted at him harshly, "Who do you think you are that dare to speak such nonsense and oppose the testament of our late lord?"

Li Gui began to abuse him: "You and your fellow plotters have fabricated this testament, setting aside the rightful heir. Now our nine districts will be lost to the Cai family. If our dead lord knew of your doings he would slay you."

Cai Mao flew into rage and ordered the loyal official to be put to death. He was hustled out but he never ceased abusing the evil Cai Mao before he died.

So the younger son was placed in his father's seat and the Cai clan shared among them the whole military authority of the district. The defense of Jingzhou was given to Deng Yi and Liu Xian, while Lady Cai and her son took up their residence in Xiangyang so as to be out of reach of the rightful heir and his uncle. They interred the remains of the late prefect in the east of Xiangyang. No obituary was sent to Liu Qi, the son, or to his uncle Liu Bei.

Liu Zong arrived at Xiangyang, but before he'd had time to recover from the fatigue of the journey, there came the startling news of the approach of Cao Cao's huge army. He immediately summoned Kuai Yue, Cai Mao, and the others for counsel. One of them, Fu Xuan, offered his advice, saying, "Not only are we threatened by a great army, but your brother at Jiangxia and Liu Bei at Xinye are also to be reckoned with. These two have not yet been notified of our

late lord's death, and they will resent that. We will be in peril if they also oppose us. But if you will adopt my advice, then our people will be as safe as Mount Tai and your position and rank will be assured."

"What is your advice?" asked the young lord.

"To offer all the nine districts to Cao Cao, who will treat you most liberally."

"What nonsense!" reputed Liu Zong angrily. "Am I to yield my late father's heritage to another when I have barely succeeded to it?"

"The advice is good," said Kuai Yue. "The concepts of conformity and deviation are well defined, so are strength and weakness. In the name of the Emperor Cao Cao is attacking both south and north. If you oppose him you will be accused of acting against the Emperor. Besides, you are not yet firmly established in your position yet you are now faced with external invasion and, most likely, internal trouble as well. Our people will be panic-stricken at the mere news of the approach of Cao Cao's army. How can we then offer any resistance?"

Liu Zong replied, "It is not that I will not follow your advice, but I fear I will be a laughingstock to the whole country if I were to abandon my inheritance without an effort."

He was interrupted by another speaker who said, "Their advice is very good, why not follow it?"

They turned toward the speaker and saw that he was Wang Can of Shanyang, a short and lean man. However, his talents did not conform to his physical appearance. When he was yet a youth he went to visit the famous scholar Cai Yong, then an official in court, and although many guests of exalted rank were present, the host hastened to welcome the newcomer with the greatest deference. The others were astonished and asked why he was so respectful to a mere youth.

"He is an unusually gifted young man, more learned than me," said Cai Yong.

Wang Can was widely read and had a most retentive memory, better than any of his contemporaries. Once, he glanced at a roadside monument as he passed and he remembered every word of the inscription. Another time, when he was watching people playing weiqi and the board was overturned, he replaced every piece in its proper place. He was also a good mathematician and his poems were exquisite. At seventeen he was appointed a palace official but did not take up the appointment. When the disturbance in the empire grew serious he sought refuge in Jingzhou, where he was received with great honor by the prefect.

That day he asked his young master, "My lord, how do you compare with Cao Cao?"

"Inferior," replied Liu Zong.

Wang Can continued, "Cao Cao has veteran soldiers and bold officers— he is able and resourceful. He has wiped out numerous rivals and suppressed rebellions. To name a few examples, he has captured Lu Bu, eliminated Yuan Shao,

drove Liu Bei into Longyou, and destroyed Ta Dun at the White Wolf Hills. Now he is on his way here and it will be very difficult to withstand him. The submission proposed by Fu Xuan and Kuan Yue is the best you can expect and you should not delay and hesitate till it is too late, for that will bring only regret."

"Worthy sir, you indeed speak to the point but I must inform my mother," said the young master.

But just then they saw his mother appear from behind a screen—she had been listening to all that was said.

"Why refer to me when three of them agree in their opinions?" she said.

So he decided on submission and the letter of surrender was composed. Song Zhong was entrusted with the job of conveying it secretly to Cao Cao. He went straight to Cao Cao's headquarters and presented the letter. It was received with rapture and the bearer was well rewarded. The submission was accepted and Song Zhong was told to tell his master to come out of the city to welcome Cao Cao—then he would be confirmed in perpetual tenure of his land.

Song Zhong left and took the homeward way. He had nearly reached the ferry when he fell in with a body of troops. On a closer look he saw the leader was Guan Yu. The messenger tried to avoid being seen but was stopped by Guan Yu, who questioned him for details of what had happened in Jingzhou. At first he prevaricated, but on being closely questioned, revealed the whole story. Guan Yu was greatly startled so he

took the man to Xinye and made him repeat his story to Liu Bei, who was also extremely alarmed.

Zhang Fei said, “In that case I propose that we put this fellow to death, then cross the river to take Xiangyang, and slay the mother and son. After that we can fight with Cao Cao.”

But Liu Bei told him to keep silent and said that he knew what to do. Then turning to the prisoner he said reproachfully, “You knew they did all this. Why didn’t you come to tell me? As things stand now there is nothing to be gained by killing you. Leave here at once.”

Song Zhong stammered his thanks and, throwing his hands over his head, quickly ran away.

Liu Bei was very sad. As he sat worrying about the critical situation, Liu Qi’s messenger, Yi Qi, was announced. Liu Bei was very grateful to this man for having saved his life before so he went down the steps to welcome him.

Yi Qi said, “The young master has heard that his father is dead, but his stepmother and her family have kept back the news and have set up Liu Zong as the new ruler. He knows the news is true, as he has sent a special messenger to find out. He is afraid that you might still be in the dark so he has sent me to deliver this obituary and he begs you to lead all the men you have to Xiangyang to help him assert his rights.”

Liu Bei read the letter. Then he said, “Well, you only know that the younger son has usurped the lordship, but you hardly know that he has already offered the nine districts to Cao Cao.”

This news shocked Yi Qi. “Where did you get this news?” he asked.

Liu Bei told him of the capture of Song Zhong. Yi Qi said, “In that case you can use the excuse of mourning over our late lord’s death to go to Xiangyang and so draw Liu Zong out of the city to welcome you. Then you can seize him, slay his party, and take the district.”

“This is good advice,” said Zhuge Liang. “My lord, you ought to take it.”

Tears rolled down his face as Liu Bei said, “On his deathbed my brother entrusted his sons to my care. If I lay hands upon one of his sons and seize the land, how will I be able to look my brother in the face when I meet him bye and bye under the nine springs?”

“If you do not act in this way now how will you repel Cao Cao, who has already reached Wancheng?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“We can take refuge in Fancheng,” replied Liu Bei.

At about this time scouts came to say that Cao Cao’s army had reached Bowang. So Yi Qi was immediately sent back with instructions for Liu Qi to prepare the defense of Jiangxia, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang discussed plans for countering the enemy.

Zhuge Liang urged his master to take heart. As he had seen the last army destroyed by fire, so would he see this one

suffer the same strategy. He said, “We can no longer stay here. Better move over to Fancheng as soon as possible.”

Then notices were posted at the four gates to inform all the residents, men or women, old or young, that, if they would, they could follow their ruler at once to the new city to escape danger. Sun Qian was entrusted with the job of preparing boats to transport the people and Mi Zhu was responsible for the safe conveyance of the families of the officials.

Then the officers assembled to take orders from Zhuge Liang. Guan Yu, at the head of a thousand men, was to lay an ambush at the upper reaches of the White River. His men were to carry bags to be filled up with sand and earth to dam the river, until they heard the arrival of the enemy at the lower reaches, at about the third watch the next day. Then the waters were to be freed to drown their foe. At the same time he was to come downstream to join in the fight.

Zhang Fei, with another thousand men, was to go to Boling Ferry, where the current was the slowest. After the waters of the White River had been let loose on Cao Cao’s men they would surely attempt to get across the river at the ferry. He was to attack them while they were trying to escape.

Zhao Yun was to divide 3,000 soldiers into four sections and take one to lie in wait outside the east gate. The other three were to be posted outside the other gates. But before they left for their posts they were to pile sulfur niter and other combustibles onto the roofs of the houses in the city.

The intention was to again attack the enemy with fire. When Cao Cao’s men arrived, they would certainly look for shelter

first. There would be a strong wind the following evening, which would fan the flames. When this wind began to blow, Zhao Yun's men were to shoot arrows of fire into the city from the south, west, and north gates. When the flames were high the men were to raise a great shouting outside to add to the general terror. The east gate was to be left free for the enemy to escape, but as they did so they would be smitten by Zhao Yun, who was to join Guan Yu and Zhang Fei at daybreak—together they would set out for Fancheng after the battle.

Other orders were given to Mi Fang and Liu Feng, who were to take command of 2,000 men, one half carrying red flags and the other half blue flags. They were to camp at Magpie Tail slope, about thirty li from the city. At the sight of Cao Cao's army the soldiers with red flags were to move on the left and those with blue flags were to move on the right. The enemy would be so confused that they would be afraid to advance further. The two of them should wait until they saw the city on fire. Then they were to attack the defeated enemy and later to move forward to the upper reaches of the river to assist in the fighting against Cao Cao's men.

All the orders being given, the various officers went their way to take up their positions and await the burning of the city. Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei stood on a promontory, where they could witness what would happen and await for reports of victory.

Meanwhile, Cao Ren and Cao Hong, with their 100,000 men, preceded by Xu Chu, leading 3,000 mailed men, marched toward Xinye. They presented a formidable sight. They reached Magpie Tail slope about noon. Looking ahead, they

saw what seemed a substantial army with blue and red flags. Xu Chu urged his men to press forward. But, as he got near, the soldiers holding the flags moved respectively to the right and left and he hesitated. Suspecting an ambush, Xu Chu called a halt and rode back to the main army to see Cao Ren.

"Those soldiers are only to confuse you," said Cao Ren. "Advance, there is no ambush. I will hasten up with the supporting forces."

So Xu Chu rode to the slope again and advanced. When he reached the wood where he had seen the flags, he found it deserted. By then the sun had already set in the west, but he decided to move on. At that moment he heard from the hills the sound of drums and trumpets and, looking up, saw on the hilltop two umbrellas surrounded by many banners. There sat Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, quietly drinking. Enraged, he sought for a way up, but logs of wood and great stones were thrown down and he was driven back. At the same time there came a confused roar from the rear of the hills. He tried to find a way to attack but darkness had descended.

Then Cao Ren arrived and ordered an attack on Xinye, so that his army might have a place to rest later. When they got to the walls they found the gates wide open. They met with no resistance as they entered and they discovered that it was a completely deserted city. No one was visible.

"This shows they are panic-stricken," said Cao Ren. "They have all run away, people and all. We may as well occupy the city and rest for the night. Tomorrow we will advance again."

The soldiers were fatigued after the long march and hungry as well, so they lost no time in scattering among the houses and setting about preparing food. The two leaders took up quarters in the official residence.

After the first watch a strong wind began to blow. Soon after, guards at the gates reported that a fire had started.

“Some careless men must have let sparks fly about. There is nothing to worry about,” said Cao Ren.

Hardly had he finished speaking when along came urgent reports of similar fires from the south, west, and north gates. Cao Ren realized that the fires were not due to accidents. So he immediately gave orders to evacuate the city. Soon, the whole city was on fire and a red glow hung in the sky. The army was beset with fire fiercer than it had been at Bowang.

Thrice wicked was Cao, but he was bold;

Though all in the capital he controlled,
Yet with this he was not content,
So southward his ravaging army went.

But, the fall wind aiding, the Spirit of Fire

Wrought to his army destruction dire.

Officers and men dashing through the smoke and fire in utter confusion sought some way of escape, and hearing that the east gate was free, they made for that quarter. Out they rushed pell-mell, many being trodden down and trampled to death. Those who got through took the road to the east.

But presently there was shouting behind them and Zhao Yun came up with his men and attacked. Cao Ren's men scattered, each fleeing for his life. None would turn back and fight. A little later they were further smitten by Mi Zhu and Liu Feng. At about the fourth watch the fleeing men, most of them badly burned and very wearied, reached the shore of the White River.

To their joy, the river was shallow and fordable. And both men and horses went down into the stream and drank their fill, men shouting and horses neighing.

In the meantime Guan Yu had dammed the river with sandbags at its upper part, so that its waters were collected in a lake. Toward dusk he saw the red glow of the burning city and began to listen for his signal. At about the fourth watch he heard the sounds of men and horses downstream and at once ordered the breaking of the dam. The water rushed down in a torrent and overwhelmed the horses and men in the bed of the river. Many were swept away and drowned.

Cao Ren led the remainder to escape from where the current was not so swift. But to their dismay, as they reached the ferry at Bowang they were again faced with loud shouting, and they found their road barred by a troop led by Zhang Fei.

"You Cao brigands!" shouted Zhang Fei. "Come and meet your fate!"

Within the city the red flame leaps out:

On the riverbank black anger is met.

Whether Cao Ren could escape death will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* Also called Yan Yuan (521 B.C.–490 B.C.), the best-known disciple of Confucius.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Liu Bei Leads His People Across the River

Zhao Yun Rescues the Child of His Lord

The last chapter closed with Zhang Fei blocking the enemy's escape route. He met with Xu Chu and combat began, but Xu Chu had no heart to engage in a prolonged fight and ran away. Zhang Fei pursued till he came upon Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, and the three went upstream where boats had already been prepared. They all crossed the river and went toward Fancheng. As soon as they disembarked Zhuge Liang ordered the boats and rafts to be burned.

Cao Ren gathered together the remnants of his army and camped at Xinye, while his brother, Cao Hong, went to tell their lord the bad tidings of the defeat.

"This rustic fool, Zhuge Liang!" exclaimed Cao Cao angrily. "How dare he do this to me!"

He then set out with his overwhelming army to camp at the deserted city of Xinye and gave orders for the soldiers to search the hills and fill up the White River in order to launch a violent assault on Fancheng from every side.

His advisor Liu Ye came in to see him and said, “Sir, you are new to this district and you should win over the people’s hearts first. Liu Bei has evacuated all the people from Xinye to Fancheng. If we move straight in, the two places will be ground to powder. It would be better to call upon Liu Bei to surrender first, which will prove to the people that you care for them. If he yields then we can capture Jingzhou without fighting.”

Cao Cao agreed and asked him who could be sent as a suitable messenger.

“Xu Shu is a close friend of Liu Bei’s and he is here with the army,” suggested Liu Ye. “Why not send him?”

“But he may not come back,” objected Cao Cao.

“If he does not return he will be a laughingstock to all—he will come back.”

So Xu Shu was sent for, and Cao Cao said: “My first intention was to raze Fancheng to the ground, but out of pity for its people I want you to go and make an offer to Liu Bei. If he is willing to surrender he will not be punished but will be rewarded with a high rank. If he holds on to his present misguided course all his people and army will be destroyed. Now you are an honest man so I confide this mission to you, and I trust you will not disappoint me.”

Xu Shu accepted the order and went to Fancheng, where he was received by both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. They enjoyed talking over old times before Shu mentioned the object of his mission. Then he said, “Cao Cao has sent me to ask you to

surrender, which is only a pretense to win over the people. In fact, he is damming up the White River and his army, now divided into eight troops, will be sent against you. I fear you will not be able to hold the city. You must prepare to leave at once."

Liu Bei asked Xu Shu to remain with them, but he said that it was not possible, for all the world would ridicule him if he stayed.

"My old mother is dead and I will regret it to the end of my life. My body may be over there, but I swear I will never form a plan for him. You have Sleeping Dragon to help you and need have no anxiety about the fulfillment of your great designs. But I must go."

Liu Bei felt he could not press his friend to stay and so Xu Shu took his leave. He returned to Cao Cao's camp and reported that Liu Bei had no intention to surrender. This angered Cao Cao who gave orders to begin the advance.

Liu Bei asked Zhuge Liang what could be done to avert the crisis.

Zhuge Liang said, "We must abandon this place at once and seek a temporary stay in Xiangyang."

"But what of the people who have followed us all along? They cannot be abandoned."

"You can tell them to do as they wish. They may go with us if they like, or remain here."

They sent Guan Yu to prepare boats and told Sun Qian to proclaim to the people that Cao Cao was coming and that the city could not be defended, and those who wished to follow their lord would have to cross the river with the army. All the people cried, “We will follow our lord, even if we must die.”

They started that very day, weeping and crying, the young helping the aged, parents carrying their children, and men leading their women. As the crowds crossed the rolling waves from both banks arose the incessant sounds of lamentation.

Liu Bei was much affected as he saw all this from his boat. “Why was I ever born,” he said, “to be the cause of all this misery to the people?”

He made to leap overboard, but was held back by those around him. All were deeply moved when they heard of this. When his boat reached the southern shore he looked back at the weeping crowds still waiting on the other bank. He bade Guan Yu hasten the boats before he mounted and rode away.

When Xiangyang came in sight they saw many flags flying on the walls and that the moat was protected by abatis defenses. Liu Bei checked his horse and called out, “Liu Zong, my good nephew, I only wish to save the people and nothing more. Open the gates quickly, I pray you.”

But Liu Zong was too frightened to appear. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went up to the gate tower and ordered soldiers to shoot arrows down on those outside the city. The people gazed up at the tower and cried aloud.

Suddenly a warrior, with several hundred followers, rushed up the tower and cried out, “You two traitors! The princely Liu is a most upright man. He has come here for the sake of saving his people. Why do you repulse him?”

All looked at this man, who was of tall stature, with a face as dark as a ripe date. His name was Wei Yan, a native of Yiyang. Whirling his sword he slew several guards, threw open the gates, and dropped down the drawbridge.

“Come in with your army, General,” cried Wei Yan, “and let us together slay these traitors!”

Zhang Fei plunged forward to go in but was checked by his brother, who said, “Don’t frighten the people!”

Wei Yan, on the other hand, kept urging Liu Bei to enter the city. At that moment an officer galloped out of the city with his men. The newcomer shouted to Wei Yan, “How dare you, a mere nobody, create trouble? Don’t you know me, General Wen Ping?”

Wei Yan became very angry. Setting his spear, he galloped forward to attack his opponent. The soldiers joined in the battle and the noise rose to the skies.

“I wanted to protect the people and I am only causing them injury,” cried Liu Bei, distressed. “I do not wish to enter the city.”

“Jiangling is a strategically important point in this region—we can take that first as a place to dwell in,” said Zhuge Liang.

“Good idea,” agreed Liu Bei.

So they left Xiangyang and went toward Jiangling with the people. Many of the inhabitants of that city took advantage of the confusion to escape and they also joined Liu Bei’s column.

Meanwhile, within the inhospitable city, Wei Yan and Wen Ping fought. The battle continued for about four hours during the middle of the day, and as all his followers were killed Wei Yan got away by himself. As he could not find Liu Bei he rode off to Changsha to seek asylum with Prefect Han Xuan.

Liu Bei moved away from the city that had refused him shelter. Both soldiers and people, his following numbered more than 100,000. There were several thousand carts, and the carriers were innumerable. On the way they went past the tomb of Liu Biao and Liu Bei led all his officers to bow at the grave. He prayed in tears: “Imbecile is your brother, lacking both in virtue and in talents. I have been unworthy of your trust. The fault is all mine and the people have committed no sin. May your glorious spirit descend and rescue them!”

His prayer was fraught with sorrow and all those about him wept.

Just then a scout rode up with the news that Fancheng was already occupied and that Cao Cao’s men were preparing boats and rafts to cross the river. Seeing that the situation was extremely dangerous, Liu Bei’s officers tried to persuade their lord to abandon the people and move swiftly into Jiangling. They said, “Jiangling is a defensible place, but with this crowd we can only advance very slowly—when can we reach

the city? If Cao Cao arrives, we will be in a parlous state. We had better leave the people for the time being and press on with our journey to the city."

But Liu Bei replied with tears in his eyes: "The success of every great enterprise lies in people. Now that the people have come to me, how can I abandon them?"

When the people heard his words they were greatly affected.

> In times of stress his heart was tender toward his people,
> He wept as he stepped into the boat, warming the hearts of all.
> Even today, on a visit to the river,
> Elders recall the kindness of the princely Liu.

The progress of Liu Bei, with the crowd of people in his train, was very slow.

"The pursuers will be upon us quickly," said Zhuge Liang. "Let us send Yun-chang to Jiangxia to get help from Liu Qi and tell him to assemble his men and sail at once to Jiangling to join us."

Liu Bei agreed to this. Guan Yu and Sun Qian were dispatched with an urgent letter from him to ask for assistance from Liu Qi, accompanied by five hundred soldiers. Zhang Fei was put in command of the rear force and Zhao Yun was entrusted with the safety of the families of the officials, while the others were to take care of the people on the journey. They only traveled a short distance daily and the halts were frequent.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao was at Fancheng, from where he sent a messenger over the river to Xiangyang to summon Liu Zong. However, the young lord was too afraid to answer the call even though Cai Mao and Zhang Yun tried to persuade him to go. Wang Wei, one of his officials, said to him privately, "Now you can overcome Cao Cao if you are wise. Since you have surrendered and Liu Bei has gone away, Cao Cao will slacken off his vigilance and you can catch him unawares. Send a picked force to assail him in some commanding position and he can be destroyed. If you were to defeat Cao Cao, your fame would run throughout the empire and the land would be yours for the taking. This is a splendid opportunity that will not recur and you should not miss it."

The young man confided in Cai Mao who abused Wang Wei, calling him an evil counselor who knew nothing about the design of Heaven.

Wang Wei angrily retorted, "You traitor! I wish I could eat you alive!"

Cai Mao was furious and he would have slain the bold speaker if his colleague Kuai Yue had not dissuaded him.

Then Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went to Fancheng to bow before Cao Cao. These two were extremely specious and flattering. To every question Cao Cao asked concerning the resources of the district, Cai Mao replied in detail. "There are 50,000 cavalry, 100,000 infantry, and 80,000 marines. Most of the money and grain are at Jiangling but all the other places also have ample supplies for a year."

“How many war vessels are there? Who is in command?” asked Cao Cao.

“The ships and boats number 7,000 and we two are the commanders,” answered Cai Mao.

Hearing this, Cao Cao conferred upon both Cai Mao and his colleague the title of “marquis.” Cai Mao was also given command of the marine force, with Zhang Yun as his helper. They were exhilarated and thanked Cao Cao profusely for these honors.

Cao Cao told them that he would propose to the Emperor that Liu Biao’s son should be permanent Prefect of Jingzhou, following in succession after his late father. With this promise to their young master, they took their leave.

When they were gone, Xun You asked Cao Cao why he had treated these two evident self-seekers and flatterers so generously. Cao Cao replied with a smile, “Do I not know what sort of men they are? Unfortunately, our men from the north know nothing about warfare on the water and these two do. I need their help for the present. When my end is achieved I know what to do with them.”

Liu Zong was highly delighted when he learned of Cao Cao’s promise. The next day he crossed the river with his mother to welcome Cao Cao and to present his seal and military emblems. He was received graciously.

Cao Cao at once proceeded to camp outside Xiangyang. The populace, following the order of Cai Mao and Zhang Yun,

welcomed him with burning incense, and he for his part, offered comforting terms.

Presently he entered the city and took his seat in the official residence. Then he summoned Kuai Yue and said to him agreeably, “I do not rejoice so much in gaining Jingzhou as at meeting you.”

He made Kuai Yue Prefect of Jiangling and Marquis of Fancheng; his other supporters were all ennobled. However, in spite of his former promise, he gave Liu Zong only the rank of Governor of Qingzhou, a city in the far north, and ordered him to leave at once for his new post. Greatly frightened, Liu Zong pleaded that he had no wish to become an official but only wanted to remain in the place where his parents had lived.

Cao Cao said, “Your governorship is quite near the capital and I have sent you there so that you will not be harmed by intrigues in this place.”

In vain did Liu Zong decline the post thrust upon him, and was compelled to depart, taking his mother with him. Of his former subordinates, Wang Wei alone accompanied him. All the others only escorted him as far as the river and took their leave. Then Cao Cao called his trusted officer, Yu Jin, and told him to follow up Liu Zong and put him and his mother to death to avoid trouble in the future.

Yu Jin led his men to pursue the small party. When he drew near he shouted, “I have an order from the prime minister to put you both to death, mother and son—you may as well submit quietly.”

Lady Cai threw her arms about her son, lifted up her voice, and cried. Yu Jin ordered the soldiers to continue with their bloody work. Wang Wei made an attempt to save his young master and mistress but was soon killed. The mother and son were also slain and Yu Jin returned to report his success. He was richly rewarded.

After that, Cao Cao sent his men to the home village of Zhuge Liang to seize his family, but they were nowhere to be found. The wise advisor had already anticipated this search and had moved his family to a safe place deep in the rivers. It was much to Cao Cao's resentment that the search was fruitless.

As Xiangyang was settled, Xun You advised his master to advance further to Jiangling. He said, "Jiangling is an important place, very rich in supplies. If Liu Bei gets it, it will be difficult to dislodge him."

"I have not forgotten that," said Cao Cao.

Then he called together the old officers of Xiangyang to look for one who could lead the way. They all came, except Wen Ping.

Cao Cao sent for him and he came. "Why are you late?" asked Cao Cao.

"To be an officer and see his master lose his land is most shameful. I was too sad and ashamed to show up earlier."

He burst into tears as he finished speaking. Cao Cao admired his loyalty and rewarded him with office and a title. Then he was ordered to lead the way to Jiangling.

Scouts came in to report how Liu Bei was hampered by the crowds of people who had followed him. And he was then only 300 li away. Cao Cao decided to give chase at once, so he picked out 5,000 of the most powerful cavalrymen and sent them after Liu Bei, ordering to overtake him within one day and night. The main army would follow.

As has been said, Liu Bei was traveling with a huge following. Guan Yu had been sent to Jiangxia. One day Zhuge Liang said, "There is as yet no news from Yun-chang. I wonder what is happening."

"I hope you can go there too," said Liu Bei. "Liu Qi will remember your former kindness to him and seeing you he will consent to assist us."

Zhuge Liang agreed and set out with Liu Feng, the adopted son of Liu Bei, taking an escort of 500 soldiers.

That day, while progressing in company with three of his close followers, a sudden blast of wind swirled up right in front of Liu Bei, and a huge column of dust shot up into the air, covering even the face of the sun. Liu Bei was frightened and asked what that might portend. Jian Yong, who knew something of the mysteries of nature, took the auspices by counting secretly on his fingers. It turned out to be a very bad omen and he announced in great fright that a calamity would threaten them that very night. He urged his lord to abandon the people at once and flee quickly. But Liu Bei refused to think of it.

"If you allow your sympathy to overcome your judgment, then misfortune is very near," said Jian Yong.

Liu Bei asked, “Where are we now?” His attendants told him that they were near the town of Dangyang and there was a hill called Jingshan. Liu Bei gave orders for the procession to camp by the hill.

The season was late fall, just changing to winter, and the icy wind pierced their very bones. As evening fell, long-drawn howls of misery were heard on every side. In the middle of the fourth watch, two hours after midnight, they heard a rumbling sound in the northwest. Liu Bei halted and placed himself at the head of his own troop of 2,000 men to meet whatever might come. Presently, Cao Cao’s men appeared and attacked with a fierce onslaught. Defense was impossible, though Liu Bei fought desperately. By good fortune, just at the critical moment Zhang Fei came up, cut his way through, rescued his brother, and got him away toward the east. However, they were stopped by Wen Ping.

“You turncoat! Are you brazen enough to look men in the face?” cried Liu Bei.

Wen Ping was overwhelmed with shame and led his men away toward the northeast. Zhang Fei, now fighting, now fleeing, protected his brother till dawn. By that time the sound of battle was far away and Liu Bei stopped to rest. He looked about him and saw there were only a hundred or so of his men still at his side. He knew nothing of the fate of his people, his family, or his trusted officers. He raised his voice in deep lamentation. “Myriads of living souls are suffering from this calamity because they did not want to desert me. My officers and my family are all lost. Even a man of clay or wood cannot help weeping at such great sorrow.”

While he was lamenting he saw Mi Fang staggering up, with several of the enemy's arrows still sticking in his face. Seeing him, Mi Fang said, "Zhao Yun has gone over to Cao Cao!"

Liu Bei angrily told him to be silent. "Zi-long is my old friend. How can he betray me?" he cried.

"Perhaps he has gone over to seek fortune," said Zhang Fei. "He must see that we are nearly lost."

"He has followed me faithfully through all my misfortunes. His heart is firm as a rock. No fortune could move him."

"I saw him go away toward the northwest," said Mi Fang.

"Let me go and find him," said Zhang Fei. "If I find him, I'll kill him."

"Don't misjudge him," said Liu Bei. "Have you forgotten how your brother slew Yuan Shao's two generals? There is bound to be some good reason why he has gone that way. I'm sure he'll never desert me."

But Zhang Fei would not be convinced. Taking a score of his men, he rode to the Long Slope Bridge. Seeing a wood near the bridge, an idea suddenly struck him. He ordered his followers to cut branches from the trees, tie them to the tails of the horses, and ride to and fro so as to raise a great dust as though an army were concealed in the wood. He himself took up his position on the bridge, with his spear set ready for action, and kept watch toward the west.

Now Zhao Yun, after fighting with the enemy from the fourth watch till daylight, could see no sign of his lord and, moreover, had lost his lord's family. He thought bitterly to himself: "My master left his family and the young lord in my care; and yet I've lost them. How can I look him in the face? I can only go now and fight to the death. Whatever happens I must find the ladies and my lord's son."

Turning about he found he had but two score followers left. He rode forth among the scattered soldiers looking for the two ladies. The lamentations of the people about him were enough to make heaven and earth weep. Some had been wounded by arrows, others by spears—numerous of them had abandoned their children, and were flying in crowds they knew not where.

As he was riding along he saw a man lying in the grass and recognized him as Jian Yong.

"Have you seen the two ladies?" he cried.

Jian Yong replied, "They gave up their carriage and ran away, taking the baby with them. I galloped after them but as I turned a slope I was wounded by an enemy spear and fell from my horse. The horse was snatched. I could fight no longer and had to lay down here."

Zhao Yun put the wounded man on the horse of one of his followers, ordered two soldiers to accompany him, and asked him to tell their lord what had happened. "Tell him that I will seek the ladies and the child in Heaven or hell, through good or evil, and if I fail to find them I will die on the battlefield."

Then he rode off toward the Long Slope Bridge. As he went a voice called out, “General Zhao, where are you going?”

“Who are you?” asked Zhao Yun, pulling up.

“One of our lord’s carriage guards. I am wounded by an arrow.”

“Do you know anything of the two ladies?”

“Not very long ago I saw Lady Gan going south with a party of other women. Her hair was down and she was barefoot.”

Hearing this, without even tending the speaker, Zhao Yun put his horse at full gallop toward the south. Soon he saw a crowd of several hundred people, male and female, walking hand in hand.

“Is Lady Gan among you?” he called out.

A woman in the rear of the party looked up at him and uttered a loud cry. Zhao Yun slipped off his steed, struck his spear in the earth, and wept. “It was my fault that you were separated from our lord. But where are Lady Mi and the baby?”

She replied, “She and I were forced to abandon our carriage and mingle with the crowd on foot. Then a band of soldiers came up and we were separated. I do not know where they are. I alone escaped here.”

As she spoke a howl of distress rose from the crowd of fugitives, for a company of soldiers appeared. Zhao Yun recovered his spear and mounted ready for action. Presently

he saw among the soldiers a prisoner bound upon a horse—the prisoner was Mi Zhu. Behind him was an enemy officer gripping a huge sword and leading a thousand or more soldiers. The men belonged to the army of Cao Ren and the officer, having captured Mi Zhu, was taking him to his chief as a proof of his prowess.

Zhao Yun shouted and rode at the captor who was speedily unhorsed and his captive was set free. Then snatching two horses, Zhao Yun placed the lady on one and Mi Zhu on the other. They rode away toward the Long Slope.

There, standing grim on the bridge, was Zhang Fei. As soon as he saw Zhao Yun he called out, "Zi-long, why have you betrayed my brother?"

"I fell behind because I was seeking the ladies and our young lord," said Zhao Yun. "What do you mean by talking of betrayal?"

"If Jian Yong had not arrived before you I should hardly have spared you."

"Where is the master?" said Zhao Yun.

"Not far away, just in front."

Zhao Yun said to Mi Zhu, "Please conduct Lady Gan to him. I am going to look for Lady Mi and the baby again." And he turned back to resume his search among the enemy troops.

Before long he saw one of Cao Cao's officers galloping up, followed by a score of riders. He was armed with an iron

spear and carrying a sword slung across his back. Without uttering a word Zhao Yun rode straight at him and attacked. At the first pass he slew his opponent and brought him down to earth. His followers fled away.

This fallen officer was Xiahou En, Cao Cao's sword-bearer—and the sword on his back was his master's. Cao Cao had two precious swords, one called Yi Tian ("Trust in Heaven") and the other Qing Gang ("Blue Light"). Yi Tian was the weapon he usually wore at his side, the other being carried by his sword-bearer. Qing Gang would cut clean through iron as though it were mud and no sword had so keen an edge.

When Zhao Yun fell in with Cao Cao's sword-bearer the latter was simply blundering along behind his master, depending upon the authority conferred by his office. Little did he expect to come across Zhao Yun and was killed instantly

So Zhao Yun got possession of the sword. Seeing the name Qing Gang embossed in gold characters, he recognized its value at once. He stuck it in his belt, took his spear, and again plunged into the enemy troops. Just as he did so he glanced back and saw he had not a single follower left. He was all alone.

Nevertheless, not for a single instant did he think of turning back, for he was too intent upon his quest. To and fro, back and forth, he rode about. Whenever he met crowds of people he questioned them for news of Lady Mi. At length a man said, "Lady Mi, with the child in her arms, is wounded in the

thigh so that she cannot walk. She is sitting over there inside the broken wall."

Zhao Yun hastened to look and there, beside a dry well behind the broken wall of a burned house, sat the mother clasping the child to her breast and weeping.

Zhao Yun was on his knees before her in a moment.

"The child will live now that you are here," cried Lady Mi. "Pity his father, General, for he has drifted about the world half of his lifetime but has only this son of his own flesh and blood. Take him to his father and I can die content."

"It is my fault that you have suffered," replied Zhao Yun. "But it is useless to say any more. Pray take my horse and I will walk beside you and protect you till we get clear."

"No," she objected. "How can you be without a steed, General? The boy here depends on your protection. I am badly wounded and cannot hope to live. Pray take him and go your way. Do not trouble more about me."

"I hear shouting," said Zhao Yun. "The soldiers will be upon us again in a moment. Pray mount quickly."

"Indeed I cannot go," she said. "Do not let there be a double loss!" And she held out the child toward him as she spoke.

"Take the child," she cried. "His life is in your hands."

Again and again Zhao Yun begged her to get onto his horse, but she would not. The shouting drew nearer and nearer. Zhao

Yun spoke harshly, “If you will not do what I say, what will happen when the soldiers are here?”

At this she said no more. Putting the child on the ground she turned and threw herself into the dry well. And there she perished.

> The warrior relies upon the strength of his charger,
>
> Afoot, how could he shield his young master from harm?
>
> Brave mother! who died to preserve the son of her husband’s line;
> Heroine was she, bold and decisive!

Seeing that the lady had died and there was nothing more to be done, Zhao Yun pushed down the broken wall to cover the well lest the dead body should suffer shame. Then he loosened his armor, let down the heart-protecting mirror, and placed the child in his breast. This done he took his spear and remounted.

He had gone but a short distance when he was confronted by Yan Ming, one of Cao Cao’s lesser captains. This warrior used a double-edged, three pointed-weapon and he offered battle. However, Zhao Yun disposed of him after a very few bouts and dispersed his men.

As the road cleared before him he saw another detachment barring his way. At the head of this was an officer of rank exalted enough to display a banner with his name, Zhang He. Zhao Yun didn’t wait to parley but attacked at once.

However, this was a more formidable antagonist and half a score of bouts found neither any nearer defeat. But Zhao Yun, with the child in his bosom, could only fight with the greatest caution and so he decided to flee.

Zhang He pursued and as Zhao Yun thought only of spurring his steed to get away, a little way down the road he suddenly went crashing into a pit. On came his pursuer, his spear poised to thrust. Suddenly a brilliant flash of light seemed to shoot out of the pit and the fallen horse leapt with it into the air and was again on firm earth.

> A bright glory surrounds the child of the imperial line, now in danger.
>
> The powerful charger forces his way through the press of battle,
> Bringing to safety the prince who was to sit on the throne two score years and two;
>
> And the general thus manifested his godlike courage.

This apparition frightened Zhang He, who abandoned the pursuit forthwith. Zhao Yun rode off. Very soon, however, he heard two enemy officers shouting behind him, calling him to halt, and at the same time he saw two more officers blocking his way in front. All four of them had formerly been Yuan Shao's men. Attacked by the four, Zhao Yun's position seemed desperate, but he fought fearlessly.

As numerous men of Cao Cao's came pressing on he drew out the precious sword to beat them off. Nothing could resist

the special blade. The sword cut through armor and clothing without effort and blood gushed forth in fountains wherever it struck. The four officers were soon beaten off and Zhao Yun was once again free.

From a hilltop, Cao Cao now saw him showing such valor that none could withstand him, so he immediately asked those around him whether they knew who he was. As no one recognized him, Cao Hong galloped down to the battlefield and shouted to the hero, asking him his name.

"I am Zhao Zi-long of Changshan," replied Zhao Yun.

Cao Hong returned and told his lord, who said, "A very tiger of a warrior! I must get him alive." Therefore he sent messengers to all detachments with urgent orders that no arrows were to be fired at any point Zhao Yun should pass—he was to be taken alive.

And so Zhao Yun was able to survive the ordeal, which was also partly due to the good fortune of the child. During this fierce battle of slaughter, Zhao Yun, bearing in his bosom the future lord, cut down two banners, seized three spears, and slew more than fifty of Cao Cao's renowned officers.

> Blood dyed his fighting robe and crimsoned his buff coat;
> None dared engage the terrible warrior at Dangyang;
> Since days of old only the brave Zhao Yun,
> Had fought on the battlefield for his lord in danger.

Thus he fought his way out of the encroachment and away from the scene of the battle. His fighting robe was soaked in blood.

On his way, however, from behind a slope emerged two other bodies of men under two Zhong brothers. One of these was armed with a massive ax, the other a halberd. As soon as they saw Zhao Yun they shouted, “Quickly dismount and be bound!”

He has only escaped from the tiger’s cave,

To risk the deep pool’s sounding wave.

How Zhao Yun escaped will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Zhang Fei Raises Havoc at Long Slope Bridge

Liu Bei Retreats to Jiangxia in Defeat

At the close of the last chapter two brothers appeared in front of our heroic warrior and barred his way of advance. Zhao Yun raised his spear and thrust forth. The brother with the battle-ax came forward to engage him but after only three bouts he was unhorsed. Zhao Yun galloped away. The other brother followed behind him, halberd in hand. The two horses, nose against tail, got so close that the reflection of the halberd could be seen in the heart-protecting mirror on Zhao Yun's back. Zhao Yun suddenly wheeled round and faced his pursuer, chest to chest. With his spear in his left hand he warded off the halberd and in his right he swung the sharp-edged sword. One slash and he had cut through both helmet and head. The poor man fell to the ground dead, a corpse with only half of a head attached to his body. The other pursuers fled and Zhao Yun continued on the road toward Long Slope Bridge.

But in his rear arose another tumultuous shouting and Wen Ping came up from behind with his men. By the time he reached the bridge he was weary and his horse spent. As he saw Zhang Fei waiting there, all ready for battle, he called out, "Help me, Yi-de!"

“Hurry along,” cried Zhang Fei. “I’ll keep back the pursuers.”

Twenty li from the bridge Zhao Yun saw Liu Bei and the others resting under some trees. He dismounted and bowed to the ground, weeping. Tears also came to Liu Bei’s eyes when he saw his faithful warrior.

Still panting from his exertions, Zhao Yun gasped out, “My fault is too grave, even death is too light a punishment. Lady Mi was severely wounded—she refused my horse and threw herself into a well. She is dead and all I could do was to cover up the well by pushing down the broken wall. But I placed the babe in the breast of my fighting robe and have fought my way out of the enemy’s encirclement, thanks to Your Lordship’s good fortune. At first he cried a good deal, but for some time now he has not stirred or made a sound. I fear I may not have saved his life after all.”

Then he opened his robe and looked—the child was fast asleep.

“Thank Heaven, your son is unhurt, sir,” said Zhao Yun happily as he held out the baby to him in both hands. Liu Bei took the child but threw it to the earth angrily, saying, “To preserve that suckling I very nearly lost a great general.”

Zhao Yun hastily picked up the child and said in tears, “Were I to suffer a violent death I could not prove my gratitude to you.”

From Cao’s army a tiger rushed,

In his breast the child slept.

To show he rated Zhao Yun high,

Liu threw his son aside.

Wen Ping and his men pursued Zhao Yun to the Long Slope Bridge, where they saw Zhang Fei's bristling mustache and fiercely glaring eyes before them. There he rode his battle steed, his hand grasping his terrible serpent-like spear, guarding the bridge. They also saw great clouds of dust rising behind the woods in the east. Fearing that they might fall into an ambush they halted, not daring to advance further.

In a little time Cao Ren and many other officers also arrived, but none dared press forward, wary not only of Zhang Fei's fierce look, but also afraid that they should become victims of yet another ruse of Zhuge Liang. As they came up they formed a line to the west of the bridge, while a messenger was sent at once to inform their lord of the situation.

As soon as Cao Cao heard about this he mounted and rode to the bridge to see for himself. Zhang Fei's fierce eyes, scanning the rear of the army opposite him, saw the silken umbrella and the banners approaching. He concluded that Cao Cao had come to find out for himself how matters stood. So in a mighty voice he shouted, "I am Zhang Yi-de of Yan—who dares to fight with me?"

At the sound of this thunderous voice a terrible quaking fear seized upon all his enemies. Cao Cao immediately told his attendants to take the umbrella away. Turning to his followers he said, "Guan Yu once said that his brother Zhang Fei could easily take the head of a powerful general amid an army of a

million soldiers. Now here he is in front of us—we must be careful."

As he finished speaking, that terrible voice was heard again: "I am Zhang Yi-de of Yan—who dares to fight with me?"

Cao Cao, seeing his enemy so fierce and resolute, began to think of retreat and Zhang Fei, noticing a movement in the rear of the enemy force, once again shook his spear and roared: "What do you mean, cowards? You will not fight, nor do you run away."

This roar had scarcely finished when an attendant of Cao Cao's, terror-stricken, reeled and fell from his horse. Panic also overpowered Cao Cao, and he turned at once to run for his life. At this, all his officers and men scurried westward in great haste. They were as frightened as a suckling babe at a clap of thunder, or like a weak woodcutter hearing the roar of a tiger. Many of them threw away their spears, dropped their casques and fled, becoming a wave of panic-stricken humanity and tumbling mass of terrified horses. Some were trampled underfoot by their own comrades.

Zhang Fei was wrathful; and who dared

To accept his challenge? Fierce he glared;
His thunderous voice rolled out, and then
In terror fled Cao Cao's million men.

Panic-stricken, Cao Cao galloped westward, thinking of nothing but getting away. He lost his headdress and his loosened hair streamed behind him. Presently, Zhang Liao

and Xu Chu came up with him and seized his bridle, yet fear had deprived him of all self-control.

“Do not be frightened,” said Zhang Liao. “After all, Zhang Fei is but one man and not worthy of so much fear. If you will only return and attack you will capture your enemy, Liu Bei.”

Their words helped Cao Cao to regain some presence of mind, so he ordered the two of them to go back to the bridge and find out the situation.

Zhang Fei saw the disorderly retreat of the enemy but he dared not pursue. Then he called back his score or so of dust-raising followers to cut loose the branches from their horses’ tails and destroy the bridge. This done, he went to report to his brother and told him of the destruction of the bridge.

“Brave as you are, brother, you’re no strategist, I’m afraid,” said Liu Bei.

“What do you mean, brother?”

“Cao Cao is very unyielding. The destruction of the bridge will bring him in pursuit.”

“He ran away at a mere yell of mine. I don’t think he dares to return.”

“If you’d left the bridge standing where it was, he wouldn’t have dared to pursue for fear of an ambush. Now the destruction of the bridge tells him we’re weak and fearful, and he’ll pursue. With his huge army he can even fill up the

big rivers to cross over. Do you think he'll be intimidated by a broken bridge?"

So Liu Bei and his men at once resumed their flight, taking a byroad toward Minyang, which led diagonally to the river.

At the same time the two officers sent by Cao Cao to the Long Slope Bridge returned with the news that the bridge had been destroyed and Zhang Fei had left.

"Then he is afraid," said Cao Cao.

He at once gave orders to set 10,000 men to start work on erecting three floating bridges for the army to cross the river that very night.

His officer Li Dian said, "This may be one of Zhuge Liang's tricks. We must be careful."

"Zhang Fei is just a bold warrior, and is not capable of any guile," said Cao Cao.

He then issued the command for an immediate advance.

Liu Bei, in the meantime, had got near the big river. Suddenly, there appeared in his track a great cloud of dust accompanied by loud rolls of drums and shouting. Dismayed, Liu Bei said, "Before us rolls the great river, behind are the pursuers. What hope is there for us?"

Hastily he asked Zhao Yun to organize a defense.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao issued an order to his army: “Liu Bei is now a fish in a pot, a tiger in a pit. If we do not catch him this time, the fish will get back to the sea and the tiger escape to the hills. Therefore every officer must spare no effort to press on.”

Consequently every officer commanded those under him to hasten forward. As they were pressing on at great speed there suddenly appeared a force from behind some hills and a voice cried, “I have waited here a long time.”

The warrior who had shouted this held in his hand the Blue Dragon sword and rode Red Hare, for indeed it was none other than Guan Yu. He had gone to Jiangxia for help and had returned with an army of 10,000 soldiers. Having heard of the battle he had taken this road to intercept.

As soon as he saw Guan Yu, Cao Cao stopped and said to his officers, “We have been tricked again by that Zhuge Liang!”

Without more ado he ordered a retreat. Guan Yu followed him some ten li and then drew off to guard his elder brother on his way to the river. There, boats were ready and Guan Yu asked his brother and family to go on board. When all were seated in the boat Guan Yu, finding his second sister-in-law missing, asked his brother about her. Then Liu Bei told him of the battle at Dangyang.

“Alas!” sighed Guan Yu. “Had you taken my advice during that hunting expedition near the capital we would have escaped the misery of this day.”

“But on that day I was afraid lest the Emperor might be harmed,” said Liu Bei. “As the saying goes, ‘Beware of damage to the vessel when pelting the rat.’”

Just as he spoke he heard war drums on the south bank. A fleet of boats, thick as a swarm of ants, came running up with swelling sails in the fair wind. He was greatly alarmed.

The boats came nearer. There he saw the figure of a young man, clad in a white robe and silver armor, who stood in the prow of the foremost boat. He cried, “Are you all right, uncle? Sorry I haven’t come earlier.”

It was Liu Qi. He came over to Liu Bei’s boat and bowed low to him. “I heard you were attacked by Cao Cao and I have come to help you.”

Liu Bei welcomed him with joy and they combined forces. The whole fleet sailed on, while they told each other of their adventures.

Unexpectedly in the southwest there appeared a line of fighting boats riding the wind. Liu Qi said, “All my men are here and now there is an enemy barring the way. If they are not Cao Cao’s ships they must be from Sun Quan in the east. We have a poor chance. What shall we do now?”

Liu Bei went to the prow and gazed at the newcomers. Presently he made out a figure in a turban and Taoist robe sitting in the bow of one of the boats and knew it to be Zhuge Liang. Behind him stood Sun Qian.

When Zhuge Liang joined his master he was asked how he came to be there. Zhuge Liang said, “When I reached Jiangxia I first sent Guan Yu to cross the river and assist you on land. I knew Cao Cao would pursue so I calculated which way you would take. I asked your nephew to come and meet you here on the river while I went to Xiakou to muster as many men as possible as reinforcements.”

The new force added to their strength and they began to explore how their powerful enemy might be overcome.

Zhuge Liang said, “Xiakou has strong fortifications as well as plentiful supplies for a lengthy stay. I think you, my lord, should camp there for the present. Your nephew can return to Jiangxia to get the fleet in order and prepare weapons. Thus you two will be able to aid each other. If we all go to Jiangxia our position will be weakened.”

Liu Qi replied, “You are quite right, sir, but I would rather my uncle stayed awhile in Jiangxia till the army was in good shape. Then he could go to Xiakou.”

“Your idea is good too,” replied Liu Bei. Then leaving Guan Yu with 5,000 men at Xiakou, the others all went to Jiangxia.

When Cao Cao saw Guan Yu emerge on land with a force, he feared lest an ambush was set out of sight, so he stopped the pursuit. He also feared in case Liu Bei should cross the river and take Jiangling before him, so he set out for the place with all haste.

The two officials in command of Jingzhou had heard of what happened at Xiangyang and, knowing that there was no

chance of successful defense against Cao Cao's army, they led out the people to the outskirts and offered submission. Cao Cao entered the city, and after restoring order and confidence, he rewarded the officials.

Then he said, "Liu Bei has gone to Jiangxia and may ally himself with Wu, then the threat to me will be greater. How can he be destroyed?"

Xun You said, "Your fame has spread wide with your splendid victories. Therefore you can send a messenger to invite Sun Quan to hunt down Liu Bei together at Jiangxia. Say that you will share Jingzhou with him and you two will then form a permanent alliance. Sun Quan will be frightened into submission and your end will be achieved."

Cao Cao agreed and sent an envoy with a letter to Wu. At the same time he prepared his army, which amounted to 833,000 men, including horse, foot, and marines—but he called it a million. The attack was to be from both land and water simultaneously. Their camps stretched some 300 li from east to west.

At this point the narrative must digress. The story of Cao Cao's movements and successes reached Sun Quan, then in camp at Caisang. He assembled his strategists to decide on a scheme of defense.

Lu Su said, "Jingzhou is contiguous to our borders. It is strong and defensible; its people are rich. It is the sort of place an emperor or a king should have. Now Liu Biao has died recently and Liu Bei has suffered a defeat. I pray you will send me there with the excuse of conveying condolences so

that I can persuade Liu Bei to bring round the officers of the late prefect to cooperate with you against Cao Cao. If Liu Bei does as I wish, then success is yours."

Sun Quan thought this a good plan, so he had the necessary gifts prepared and sent Lu Su to Jiangxia.

At Jiangxia, Liu Bei was formulating plans for dealing with the enemy with Zhuge Liang and Liu Qi.

Zhuge Liang said, "Cao Cao's power is too great for us to cope with. Let us go over to Wu and ask help from Sun Quan. If we can set north and south against each other we ought to be able to get some advantage from our medial position between them."

"But will they be willing to have anything to do with us?" doubted Liu Bei. "Sun Quan has many able men in his command and he must have ambitions of his own."

Zhuge Liang replied, "Cao Cao, with his immense army, holds the Han and Yangtze rivers. Sun Quan will certainly send someone to find out the real situation. Should any messenger come I will harness a fair wind and sail down the river to Wu. Once there, I will trust to my tongue to set north and south at each other's throats. If the southern men win, we will assist them in destroying Cao Cao in order to get Jingzhou; if the north wins, we will take the opportunity to get Wu. So we will get some advantage either way."

"That is a very fine view indeed," said Liu Bei. "But how are you going to get someone from Wu to come here?"

Liu Bei's question was answered by the announcement of the arrival of Lu Su, and as his boat touched the bank and the envoy came ashore, Zhuge Liang laughed, saying, "My plan is done!"

Turning to Liu Qi he asked, "When Sun Ce died did you send any condolences?"

"The Suns resent us for the death of their father. How can there be any mourning courtesies between us?"

"Then it is certain that this envoy does not come to present condolences but to collect military information."

So he said to Liu Bei, "When Lu Su asks about the movements of Cao Cao, you will say you know nothing. If he presses the matter, tell him to ask me."

Having thus prepared their scheme they sent some people to welcome the envoy, who entered the city in mourning garb. The gifts having been accepted, Liu Qi asked Lu Su to meet Liu Bei. After the introduction the guest was entertained with wine in the inner hall.

Lu Su said to Liu Bei, "I have long heard your glorious name, sir, but until today I have not had the good fortune of paying my respects to you. I am very gratified to meet you. You have been fighting with Cao Cao lately, though, so I presume you know his military strength. May I ask how big is his army?"

Liu Bei replied, "My army was so small that we fled whenever we heard of his approach—so I do not know how many men he has."

“I was told that you adopted the advice of Zhuge Liang and used fire on Cao Cao twice, burning his men so badly that they were scared out of their wits. How can you possibly deny any knowledge of his military strength?” said Lu Su.

“I really do not know the details unless I ask Zhuge Liang.”

“Where is Zhuge Liang? I should like to meet him,” said Lu Su.

So he was sent for and introduced to the guest. Then Lu Su said, “I have long admired your genius but have never been fortunate enough to meet you. Now that I have met you I hope you will enlighten me on the present crisis.”

Zhuge Liang answered, “I know all of Cao Cao’s wicked designs, but to our regret we are not strong enough to withstand him. That is why we have tried to avoid him.”

“Is your lord going to stay here?”

“Well, my lord is an old friend of the Prefect of Cangwu and intends to go to him.”

“He has but few men and insufficient supplies, unable even to ensure his own safety. How can he protect you?”

“His place is not one to remain for long, but it is good enough for the present. We can make other plans for the future later.”

Lu Su said, “My master General Sun is strongly posted and exceedingly well supplied. He treats able men and scholars with the greatest courtesy and so all the heroes in the east

gather round him. For your sake I think you cannot do better than send someone you trust to confer with him."

"There has never been any friendship between my master and yours," said Zhuge Liang. "I fear it will be nothing but a waste of words. Besides, we have no one to send."

"Your elder brother is an advisor of General Sun's and he is longing to see you," said Lu Su. "Although I am only a man of poor learning I should be pleased to introduce you to my master so that you can discuss weighty plans together."

"But he is my chief advisor," interrupted Liu Bei, "and I cannot do without him, not even for a moment. He cannot go."

Lu Su pressed him. Liu Bei pretended to refuse permission.

"It is important—I pray you give me leave to go," said Zhuge Liang at last.

Only then did Liu Bei consent. And they soon took leave and the two set out by boat for Sun Quan's headquarters.

> A little boat sailed down the stream with Zhuge well content;
> For he could see his enemies to black perdition sent.

The result of this journey will appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Zhuge Liang Debates With the Scholars of Wu

Lu Su Denounces the Majority Opinion

In the boat on the way to Wu, Lu Su discussed with Zhuge Liang how they should present the matter to his master. Lu Su said, “When you see General Sun, please don’t tell him the actual strength of Cao Cao’s army.”

“Don’t worry, Zi-jing,” replied Zhuge Liang, “I know how to reply.”

When the boat arrived Zhuge Liang was asked to rest in the guest-house while Lu Su went alone to see his master. He found him at a council with his advisors and officers in the audience chamber. Lu Su was at once summoned and questioned about what he had discovered on his trip to Jiangxia.

“I know the general situation,” replied Lu Su. “I will report it to you presently.”

Then Sun Quan showed Cao Cao’s letter to him. “This came yesterday. I have sent the messenger back and this meeting is to consider how to reply,” he said.

Lu Su read the letter, which briefly was something like the following:

> At the imperial command to punish the wrong doers I recently led my army to the south. Liu Zong surrendered and his people flocked to my side at the first sight of my arrival. Under my command are a million brave soldiers and a thousand able officers. My desire is, General, that we go on a hunting expedition in Jiangxia and together we will attack Liu Bei. We will share his land between us and pledge to live in perpetual friendship. I pray you will not hesitate but send me a speedy reply.

"What are you going to do, my lord?" asked Lu Su as he finished reading the letter.

"I have not yet decided."

Zhang Zhao said, "With his huge army of a million men Cao Cao is overpowering his opponents on all sides in the name of the Emperor. If you resist him you would be opposing the court. Moreover, your most important defense against him is the Yangtze, but now by occupying Jingzhou he, too, has the river to his advantage. It will be impossible for us to withstand him, and the only way to ensure tranquillity, in my humble opinion, is submission."

"What he has said accords with the manifest decree of providence," echoed all the other advisors.

Sun Quan remained silent and thoughtful.

Zhang Zhao again took up the argument. “Do not hesitate, my lord,” he added. “Submission to Cao Cao means peace for the people of Wu and safety for your six districts.”

Sun Quan still remained silent, his head bent in deep thought. After a while he rose and went inside and Lu Su followed him. Knowing that Lu Su wanted to tell him something, Sun Quan took Lu Su by the hand and asked, “What do you think?”

“What they are all saying is the worst advice. All of us can submit to Cao Cao but you cannot.”

“Why not? How do you explain that?”

“If people like myself submitted we would be sent back to our home villages and retain our official posts in various districts. But if you should submit, where could you go? You would be given the title of a nobleman, perhaps. You would have only one carriage, one saddled horse, and a few attendants. That is all. Would you be able to sit facing the south and call yourself ruler of your territory? Each one of them is thinking for himself and you should not listen to them. You, General, must decide on your great plan quickly.”

Sun Quan sighed, “I was truly disappointed with all their talk. Now you have just spoken of a great plan and your view is the same as mine. Surely Heaven has expressly sent you to me. However, Cao Cao has become all the more stronger now that he has obtained Yuan Shao’s army and Liu Biao’s men in Jingzhou. I fear he is almost too powerful to contend with.”

“I have brought back with me Zhuge Liang, the younger brother of Zhuge Jin, from my trip to Jiangxia. If you question him he can explain the true situation to you.”

“Is Master Sleeping Dragon really here?”

“Yes, he is resting in the guesthouse.”

“It is too late to see him today. But tomorrow I will assemble all my officials and let him meet the best of our men first. After that we will discuss the matter.”

With these instructions Lu Su retired. The next day he went to the guesthouse to see Zhuge Liang and cautioned him again not to mention how powerful Cao Cao’s army was.

Zhuge Liang said with a smile, “I will act as circumstances dictate. You can be sure I will not upset your plan.”

He was then conducted to where more than twenty high officials, both civil and military, were assembled. They formed a dignified conclave as they sat in state with their tall headdresses and broad girdles.

Zhang Zhao sat at the head and Zhuge Liang first saluted him. Then, after exchanging formal greetings with each of them, he took the seat for the guest. They, on their part, noted his refined and elegant manner and his commanding figure and they thought to themselves that he had come to promote his views to them.

Zhang Zhao led the way in trying to challenge the guest. “I am the least competent scholar of our district,” he said. “But I

have long heard that you compared yourself to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi when you lived as a hermit in Longzhong. Is there any truth in this?"

"To a small extent I did," replied Zhuge Liang.

"I heard that Liu Bei paid three visits to you in your cottage, and that he was so delighted to have you as his advisor that he considered himself as lucky as a fish getting back to water. Then he thought he could possess the vast area around Jingzhou and Xiangyang. Yet today all that country belongs to Cao Cao. I should like to hear your account of this."

Zhuge Liang thought, "This Zhang Zhao is Sun Quan's first advisor. Unless I can get the better of him I will never have a chance with his master." So he replied, "In my opinion the taking of the area around the Han River was as simple as turning over one's hand. But my master is both righteous and humane and would not stoop to taking the land of a member of his own house. So he refused Liu Biao's offer of succession. But Liu Zong, a mere lad, misled by specious words, submitted secretly to Cao Cao, which enabled him to become all powerful. My master is at present stationed in Jiangxia, but he has plans for the future that are not easily understood by ordinary folks."

"In that case, your deeds are at variance with your words," retorted Zhang Zhao. "You regard yourself as equal to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. Well, Guan Zhong, as chief minister of Duke Huan, put his master at the very head of the feudal nobles, making him the supreme ruler of all the land. And under the able guidance of Yue Yi the feeble country of Yan captured more than seventy cities of Qi. These two were truly

men of the most distinguished talents the land has ever known.

“But what about you? When you lived as a recluse in the cottage you passed your time in idleness, scorning the wind and the moon, or sitting leisurely clasping your knees. Now you have entered the service of Liu Bei you should bring good to the people, remove evils, and destroy rebels and brigands. Before he obtained your help, Liu Bei was able to claim some territory as his own. With you to help, all men looked up to him, expecting him to accomplish great things. Even school boys said that he was like a tiger that had grown wings—and that the Hans would be restored and Cao Cao and his faction would be exterminated. Old ministers of the court as well as hermits in the mountains rubbed their eyes and waited, believing that the time had finally come when the clouds of darkness that covered the sky would be lifted to reveal the brilliant splendor of the sun and the moon; people would be rescued out of fire and water; and all the country would be able to rest in peace and comfort.

“Why then, since you went to Liu Bei, have his men been giving up their armor and spears and fleeing like rats before Cao Cao’s army? On the one hand he failed to show his gratitude to Liu Biao by bringing tranquillity to his people. On the other, he was unable to protect his orphan sons and preserve his land? In fact, he has suffered one setback after another. He has abandoned Xinye, fled to Fancheng, been defeated at Dangyang, and escaped to Xiakou, unable to find a single place for shelter. Thus, since you joined Liu Bei, he has been worse off than before. Was it thus with Guan Zhong and Yue Yi? I trust you will forgive me for my blunt words.”

Zhuge Liang waited till he had finished his long speech, then laughed and said, “How can the common birds understand the aspirations of the roc that flies 10,000 li? Let me give you an illustration. When a man falls seriously ill, the physician must first administer soft gruel and mild drugs until his inner system is gradually regulated and his body calms down. Then he may give him meat to nourish him and powerful drugs to cure him. Thus the disease will be fully expelled and the man restored to health. If the physician does not wait till the humors and pulse are in harmony, but applies his strong drugs too early, it will be difficult to restore the patient’s health.

“In the past my master suffered defeat at Runan and had to seek refuge with Liu Biao. He had then less than one thousand soldiers and only three officers. His situation was much the same as a patient in critical condition. Xinye was but a secluded, rustic town with few inhabitants and scanty supplies, and my master only retired there as a temporary refuge. Do you think he intended to stay there permanently? Yet, with our insufficient armor and weapons, weak fortifications, untrained men, and inadequate supplies, we burned Cao Cao’s camps at Bowang and flooded his troops at the White River, frightening away able generals like Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren. I doubt whether Guan Zhong and Yue Yi could have done any better. As for the surrender of Liu Zong, my master knew nothing of it at first, and later he was too noble and righteous to take advantage of the chaos to seize a kinsman’s territory. Now with regard to my lord’s defeat at Dangyang it must be remembered that his advance was hampered by a huge following of common people, and he was too humane to abandon them. He never thought of making a speedy journey into Jiangling, but willingly suffered with his

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people, advancing only some ten li a day. This is a striking instance of his magnanimity.

"Small forces are no match for large armies and victory and defeat are common episodes in every military campaign. The great founder of the Hans suffered many defeats at the hands of Xiang Yu, but he finally conquered his opponent at the Battle of Gaixia. Was not this due to the strategy of his general, Han Xin? Yet, in his long service to his master, Han Xin was not always victorious. Indeed, important issues of the state and security of the government depend on a masterplan, far removed from the deceitful talks of bragging babblers, who surpass all when it comes to talking but fail to produce a single capable man when it comes to making decisions to meet changing situations. Truly such people are the laughingstock of all the country."

Zhang Zhao's flow of eloquence was cut short as he could find no reply to this. Then another in the assembly lifted up his voice, saying, "But what do you think of Cao Cao's power at present? There he is, encamped with a million soldiers and a thousand officers, invincible as a dragon and fearsome as a tiger. He has taken Jiangxia already in one swallow, as we can see." The speaker was Yu Fan.

Zhuge Liang replied, "Cao Cao has merely acquired Yuan Shao's swarms of ants and stolen Liu Biao's motley rabble. There is nothing to fear, even though he has millions of men."

Yu Fan smiled icily, "Defeated at Dangyang and exhausted in schemes at Xiakou, you are now reduced to begging for help from others—yet you talk about having no fear. Aren't you trying to take people in with your boastful words?"

“My master’s humane and just force consisted of only a few thousand men,” retorted Zhuge Liang. “How could he oppose a million fierce brutes? He has withdrawn to Xiakou for some breathing space. Now here you are in the east, equipped with a powerful army and ample supplies, as well as the natural barrier of the Yangtze, yet you are trying to persuade your lord to bend his knee before a rebel and to be the ridicule of the whole land. Compared to this, my master Liu Bei is not afraid of the rebel Cao Cao.”

Yu Fan, too, had nothing to reply. Next, another man in the assembly asked: “Are you trying to sell your ideas to us here in Wu with a tongue like that of Zhang Yi or Su Qin of old?”

Zhuge Liang looked at the speaker and found him to be Bu Zhi. He replied, “You regard those two as mere persuasive talkers, without realizing that they were also great heroes. Su Qin bore the prime minister’s seals of six kingdoms while Zhang Yi was twice prime minister of Qin. Both were men of outstanding ability who brought about the reformation of their governments. They were not to be compared with those who quail before the strong and overbear the weak, who fear the dagger and run away from the sword. You gentlemen, on hearing Cao Cao’s crafty and empty threats, have been so frightened that you advise your lord to surrender. Do you dare to scorn Su Qin and Zhang Yi?”

Bu Zhi was silenced. Then suddenly another man asked, “What do you think of Cao Cao?”

It was Xue Zong who had raised the question. Zhuge Liang replied, “Isn’t it obvious that he is a rebel against the Hans? No need to ask at all.”

“You are mistaken,” said Xue Zong. “The Hans have outlasted their allotted time and the end is near. Cao Cao already has two-thirds of the country and people are turning to him. Liu Bei fails to recognize the will of Heaven and insists on contending with him. It is like trying to smash a stone with an egg. Failure is certain.”

Zhuge Liang angrily rsponded: “How can you utter such undutiful words, as if you knew neither father nor emperor? Loyalty and filial duty are the essentials of a man born into this world. As a servant of Han it is your obligation to help destroy whoever turns against his emperor. Cao Cao’s forbears enjoyed the bounty of Han, but instead of showing gratitude, he nourishes in his bosom thoughts of rebellion. The whole country is incensed against him yet you allege that he is destined to rule. Truly you are a man who knows neither father nor emperor, a man unworthy to talk with. Pray say no more.”

Shame spread over Xue Zong’s face and he could not answer back. Soon another person took up the debate and said: “Although Cao Cao overawes the Emperor to coerce the nobles, yet he is the descendant of a prime minister of Han, while Liu Bei, though he says he is descended from a prince, has no proof whatsoever. In the eyes of the world he is just a weaver of mats, a seller of straw sandals. Who is he to compete with Cao Cao?”

Zhuge Liang recognized the speaker to be Lu Ji. He replied with a smile: “Are you not that Lu Ji who, as a child, pocketed oranges home for your mother when you were sitting among Yuan Shu’s guests? Please sit quietly and listen to me. Inasmuch as Cao Cao is a descendant of a prime

minister of the state, he is by heredity a servant of the House of Han all his life—yet he has usurped all state power and tyrannized over the court, inflicting every indignity upon his lord. Not only has he betrayed his emperor, but he has also brought shame to his ancestors. So he is both a traitor of Han and a renegade of his family. My lord Liu Bei is a noble scion of the imperial house upon whom the Emperor has conferred rank, as is recorded in the annals. How, then, can you say there is no proof of his imperial origin? Besides, the founder of the dynasty was himself of lowly origin, and yet he finally won the empire. Where is the shame in weaving mats and selling straw sandals? Your immature views are those of a child, unfit to be mentioned in the presence of scholars of standing."

This put a stop of Lu Ji's speech, but another of those present started up: "Zhuge Liang's words are arbitrary and unreasonable. It is not proper argument and it is no use continuing the debate. But may I ask which branch of the classical canon is your specialty?"

Zhuge Liang looked at his questioner, who was named Yan Jun, and said: "Selecting passages and choosing phrases are the business of the pedants of every age—what else are they good for? How can these people know about establishing an empire or running a government? History has produced sagacious statesmen like Yi Yin, formerly a farmer in Shen and Lu Shang, a fisherman of the Wei River, as well as great generals and ministers like Zhang Liang, Chen Ping, Deng Yu, and Geng Yan. All of them were of transcendent ability, but I have never heard of them making special studies of classical canons. Would they behave like students of books,

who while away their time between the brush and the inkstone, engaged in literary futility?"

Yan Jun hung his head with shame, unable to answer. However, yet another disputant, Cheng De-shu, suddenly said loudly: "You are fond of boastful words, sir, but they do not give any proof of your scholarship. I am inclined to think that a real scholar would just laugh at you."

Zhuge Liang replied, "There are scholars and scholars. There is the noble scholar, loyal and patriotic, of perfect rectitude and an enemy of any crookedness. The concern of such a scholar is to act in full sympathy with his day and leave to future ages a fine reputation. There is the scholar of the mean type, a pedant and nothing more. He labors constantly with his pen, in his callow youth composing odes and in hoary age still striving to understand the classics. Thousands of words flow from his brush but there is not a solid idea in his breast. He may, like Yang Xiong, glorify his name with his writings and yet stoop to serve a tyrant such as Wang Mang. No wonder Yang Xiong had to throw himself out of a window in the end. That is the way of the scholar of the mean type. Though he composes odes by the hundred, what is the use of him?"

Cheng De-shu could find no words to reply. Seeing how eloquent Zhuge Liang was in his argument, all of them turned pale with awe.

However, two others wanted to continue the debate, but before they could continue suddenly in burst a man who shouted angrily: "Zhuge Liang is the genius of our time, yet you are all attempting to humiliate him. This is not the way to

show respect to a guest. Now Cao Cao's huge army is at our very border but instead of discussing how to oppose him you waste your time wrangling with words."

All eyes turned toward the speaker—it was Huang Gai of Lingling, who was in charge of the grain supplies of Wu. He turned to address Zhuge Liang: "There is a saying that it is better to remain silent than to gain profit by talk. Why not give your valuable advice to our lord instead of wasting your time in debate with this crowd?"

"They do not understand things of the world and tried to humiliate me," replied Zhuge Liang. "I had to reply."

Then Huang Gai and Lu Su accompanied him to see their master. At the central gate they met his brother, Zhuge Jin. Zhuge Liang bowed to him deferentially.

"Why didn't you come to see me, brother?" asked Zhuge Jin.

"I'm now in the service of my lord Liu Bei and it is my duty to put public affairs before private obligations," said Zhuge Liang. "I can't attend to any private matters till my work is done. You must pardon me, brother."

"Come and talk to me after you have seen our lord," said Zhuge Jin and then he went on his way.

As they went along to the audience chamber Lu Su again cautioned Zhuge Liang against any rash speech and he nodded consent. When they arrived there, Sun Quan came down the steps to welcome his guest and was extraordinarily gracious. After the salutations Zhuge Liang was invited to sit

while the officials were drawn up in two lines—on one side, the civil and on the other, the military. Lu Su stood beside Zhuge Liang and waited to hear what he would say.

After he presented Liu Bei's compliments, Zhuge Liang stole glances at his host, noting with admiration his bright eyes, brown beard, and dignified look. He thought to himself: "Judging from his appearance he is certainly no common man. He is one to be inspired, but not to be persuaded. When he asks me I will try to stir him up to action."

Presently tea was served and Sun Quan began to speak.

"Lu Su has often spoken of your genius," he said. "It is a great pleasure to meet you. I hope you will instruct me."

"I have neither talent nor learning," said Zhuge Liang modestly. "I fear you will be disappointed in me."

"You have been at Xinye lately and you helped your master to fight that decisive battle with Cao Cao, so you must know exactly the measure of his military strength."

"My master's army is weak and his officers are few," answered Zhuge Liang, "and Xinye is a small city short of supplies. How could we oppose such a force as Cao Cao's?"

"How many men does he have in all?"

"Horse and foot, land and marine, he has more than a million men."

“Isn’t there something exaggerated about that?” asked Sun Quan.

“Not at all—when Cao Cao was in Yanzhou he already had 200,000 men from Qingzhou. He gained another 500–600,000 when Yuan Shao fell. Recently he has recruited more than 300–400,000 in the central areas. Now he has acquired 200–300,000 more from Jingzhou. If you add them all together the total is no less than 1.5 million. I said just a million because I was afraid of frightening your people.”

At this Lu Su, much disturbed, turned pale and looked anxiously at Zhuge Liang who, however, pretended not to notice.

Sun Quan asked again, “How many officers does he have?”

“Well, his clever strategists and experienced officers number to more than one or even two thousand,” replied Zhuge Liang.

“What will be Cao Cao’s next move now that he has taken Jingzhou?”

“He is camped along the river and is preparing a fleet. If he does not intend to invade your territory, what other place does he want to take?”

“If that is his intention, it is a case of fight or not fight. I hope you can decide that for me.”

“I have something to say, but I fear, sir, you might not care to hear it.”

“I would like to hear your valuable view,” answered Sun Quan.

“For a long time the empire has been in utter chaos. So you have taken the region east of the Yangtze and my master has assembled his forces south of the Han River, to challenge Cao Cao for the empire. Now Cao Cao has overcome most obstacles and his recent conquest of Jingzhou has made him the one man to fear across the land. Even though there are heroes bold enough to wrestle with him, they have no footholds to display such heroism. That is why my master has been forced to flee here. But, General, I think you must estimate your own strength before you act. If you think you are able to resist Cao Cao’s army of the north, then you should break with him without loss of time. If not, then perhaps you should follow the advice of your counselors—cease your military preparations and serve under Cao Cao.”

Before Sun Quan could reply his guest went on: “Beneath your outward show of submission you are inwardly still hesitating. The situation is developing quickly and disaster will be upon you if you do not act soon.”

Then Sun Quan replied, “If your words are true, why doesn’t Liu Bei yield?”

“In the past, Tian Heng was only a brave warrior of the state of Qi, yet he would not suffer the shame of submission—let alone my master, who is a descendent of the imperial family as well as a man of great renown, respected by all. His lack of success so far is simply the will of Heaven but he will never bow his knee to anyone.”

These last words touched Sun Quan to the quick and he could scarcely control his anger. With a flick of his sleeves, he rose and left the audience chamber. The officials present snickered as they dispersed.

Greatly annoyed, Lu Su reproached Zhuge Liang for his insolent way of talking to Sun Quan. "Luckily for you my lord is too high-minded to rebuke you to your face, but your disparaging speech was a monstrous insult to him."

Zhuge Liang threw back his head and laughed. "What a sensitive man he is!" he cried. "I know how to destroy Cao Cao, but he never asked me—so I said nothing."

"If you do know how that could be done, I will certainly beg my lord to ask you."

"Cao Cao's million men are but swarms of ants in my eyes. I have only to lift my hand and they will be crushed to powder."

Lu Su at once went in to see his master, who was still smoldering with anger. "Zhuge Liang insulted me too deeply," said Sun Quan to him.

"I have also reproached him for this," said Lu Su, "and he laughed and said you were too sensitive. He would not disclose his plan to defeat Cao Cao without being asked for it. Why not seek advice from him, my lord?"

At once Sun Quan's anger changed to joy. He said, "So he had a plan ready and his words were meant to provoke me. My shortsightedness nearly disrupted a great cause."

So he returned to the audience chamber where Zhuge Liang was still seated and asked him to continue his speech. He apologized courteously: “Please do not take offense for my rudeness just now.”

“And I also was rude,” replied Zhuge Liang. “I beg you to pardon me.”

Zhuge Liang was then invited into the inner chamber, where wine was served. After the wine had gone round several times, Sun Quan said, “Cao Cao has always regarded as his most-hated enemies Lu Bu, Liu Biao, Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu, Liu Bei, and myself. Now most of these are gone and only Liu Bei and I remain. I cannot allow the entire land of Wu to be dictated by another and I have decided to fight it out with him. But the only one who could assist me in withstanding Cao Cao is Liu Bei, but he has been defeated lately. How can he withstand another battle?”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Although we have suffered a defeat recently, Guan Yu is still commanding 10,000 veterans and Liu Qi leads another 10,000 men of Jiangxia. Cao Cao’s army comes from afar and his men are worn out after the long journey. During his last battle with us his light cavalry rode 300 li in a day and a night in pursuit of us. Just as a crossbow, at its final kick, cannot even penetrate the finest gauze, so his army has no more strength. Besides, the soldiers are from the north and unskilled in marine warfare, while the men of Jingzhou, though from the south, are unwilling supporters. They have no desire to help Cao Cao. Now if you, General, and my master fight together with one heart and mind, Cao Cao will certainly be defeated and he will be compelled to withdraw to the north. Then your country and Jingzhou will

be strong and firmly established. But the scheme must be carried out without delay and only you can decide."

Sun Quan replied with great joy: "Your words, sir, have enlightened me at once. My mind is made up and I have no more doubts. I will begin preparations for our joint attack against Cao Cao without delay."

So he told Lu Su to carry the news of his decision to all his officials and escort Zhuge Liang to the guesthouse for rest.

When Zhang Zhao heard of the decision he met his colleagues and said to them: "Our lord has fallen into Zhuge Liang's trap."

They went in a body to their lord and said, "We hear you are going to attack Cao Cao—but how do you think you stand compared with Yuan Shao? In those days Cao Cao had a weak force and few officers and yet he overcame Yuan Shao in a single strike. Today he has a million men and he is certainly not to be treated lightly. If you listen to Zhuge Liang's advice and go rashly into war, it would be like carrying firewood to extinguish a raging fire."

Sun Quan only lowered his head and made no reply. Then another advisor took up the argument. "Liu Bei has been defeated and he wants to borrow our army to help him beat his enemy. Why do you let him take advantage of you, sir? Pray listen to Zhang Zhao's words."

Doubts rose again in the mind of Sun Quan. When the group of advisors had retired, Lu Su also came in and said, "These people came to exhort you not to fight, but to surrender to

Cao Cao, simply because they wish to secure the safety of themselves and their families. They only think of their own interests. I hope you will not take their advice."

As Sun Quan seemed still undecided, Lu Su went on, "If you hesitate any longer, you will certainly be led astray by the majority."

"Leave me for a while," said his master. "I must think it over carefully."

So Lu Su left the chamber. Among the officers some were for war, but of the civil advisors, all were in favor of surrender and so there were many discussions and debates.

Sun Quan went to his private chamber, greatly troubled in mind. He could neither eat nor sleep, for he was again wavering between fight or submission.

Seeing how worried he was his mother's sister, Lady Wu, asked him, "What is troubling you that you cannot even eat or sleep?"

Sun Quan told her of the dangerous situation and the different opinions of his advisors, as well as his doubts and fears. He said, "If we go to war, we may not be able to overcome his huge army—and if we surrender, Cao Cao may harm us. So I can't make up my mind."

She replied, "Have you forgotten the last words of my sister?"

Like one recovering from a fit of drunkenness, or waking out of a dream, Sun Quan was reminded of the dying words of his mother.

> His mother's advice he called to mind,
> "In Zhou Yu's counsels you safety find."

The last words of his mother will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Zhuge Liang Stirs Zhou Yu to Action

Sun Quan Decides to Attack Cao Cao

Now Lady Wu, seeing how undecided Sun Quan was, said to him: "On her deathbed, my sister told you the last words of your brother Ce: 'For internal matters, consult Zhang Zhao, and for external ones, consult Zhou Yu.' Why don't you ask Zhou Yu for advice?"

Sun Quan was greatly relieved. He at once sent a messenger to ask Zhou Yu to come back from Poyang Lake.

But Zhou Yu was already on the way. He had been training his naval forces when he heard of the approach of Cao Cao's army and had immediately started for the headquarters without delay. So before the messenger set out he had already arrived. As he and Lu Su were close friends the latter went to welcome him and told him of all that had happened.

"Don't worry," said Zhou Yu. "I know what to do. Now please go quickly and ask Zhuge Liang to come and see me."

So Lu Su went away. Zhou Yu, however, soon had many other visitors. First came Zhang Zhao and his supporters to find out what might be afoot. They were welcomed in and,

after an exchange of the usual greetings, Zhang Zhao asked: "Have you heard of the grave danger we are in, Commander?" "No, I have heard nothing," replied Zhou Yu.

"Cao Cao and his huge army of a million men are encamped up the river. He sent us a letter yesterday asking our lord to join him in attacking Jiangxia. He may have a desire to absorb our territory—if so, he has not openly announced it. We entreated our lord to offer submission for the moment and so avoid the horrors of war on our land, but now Lu Su has returned from his trip to Jiangxia, bringing with him Liu Bei's advisor Zhuge Liang. Out of his own desire for revenge this man has come specially to talk our lord into war, yet Lu Su persists in supporting him and refuses to come to his senses. We are all waiting for your decision."

"Are you unanimous in your opinion?"

"Yes, we are of the same mind," said the others who had come with Zhang Zhao.

Zhou Yu said, "I have also wished to submit for a long time. I beg you to leave me now. Wait until tomorrow when we see our lord, there will be a final decision."

So they took their leave but they were soon followed by the military group led by Cheng Pu. They were admitted and duly exchanged greetings with their host. Then the leader said, "Have you heard that our land is about to fall into the hands of another?"

Again Zhou Yu denied any knowledge.

Cheng Pu continued: “We helped General Sun to establish his authority here and carve out this kingdom, and we fought hundreds of big and small battles before we gained these six districts. But now our lord lends his ear to his civil advisors and wishes to submit to Cao Cao. This is the most shameful and pitiful thing! We would rather die than suffer such great shame. So it is our hope that you will persuade our lord to decide on war. We promise to struggle to the last man.”

“And are you unanimous, generals?” asked Zhou Yu.

Huang Gai rose angrily and, beating his forehead, cried: “They may take my head but I swear never to surrender to Cao Cao!”

“Neither will we,” cried all the others.

“I also want to settle matters with Cao Cao on the battlefield,” answered Zhou Yu. “Submission has never crossed my mind. Now I pray you will leave me, generals. When I see our lord I will settle his doubts.”

Thus the war group also left. They were quickly succeeded by Zhuge Jin and some other civil officials. They were invited in, and after the usual courtesies, Zhuge Jin said, “My younger brother has come down the river to say that Liu Bei desires to ally himself with our lord against Cao Cao. The civil and military differ in their opinions as to what course to pursue, but as my brother is so deeply involved I dare not say much about this. We are awaiting your decision, Commander.”

“And what do you think will be the right decision?”

“Submission will be an easy road to peace while war may lead us to destruction,” replied Zhuge Jin.

Zhou Yu said with a smile, “I know what to do. Tomorrow we will assemble in our lord’s place and decide.”

So Zhuge Jin and his group took their leave. But soon after came Lu Meng and his friends, who were also eager to discuss the issue with their commander. Some were for war, others were for submission, and they disputed with each other.

Zhou Yu stopped them. “Say no more. Let us decide it tomorrow at our lord’s place.”

They went away. Zhou Yu smiled cynically to himself.

As evening came on it was announced that Lu Su had brought Zhuge Liang to see him. Zhou Yu went out of the main gate to welcome them in. When they had taken their respective seats as host and guests, Lu Su spoke first.

“Cao Cao has come with a huge army against the south. Our lord is unable to make up his mind whether to submit or to fight and waits for your decision. What is your opinion?”

Zhou Yu replied, “We should not oppose Cao Cao as he is acting in the name of the Emperor. Moreover, he is very strong and to attack him is to take serious risks. In my opinion, opposition inevitably means defeat whereas submission means peace. I have decided to advise our lord to send an offer of surrender.”

“But you are wrong,” stammered Lu Su in astonishment. “This land here has been ours for three generations. How can we abandon it to another so easily? General Sun Ce said before he died that you were to be entrusted with external matters and we expect you to secure the safety of our land, knowing you will be as reliable as Mount Tai. How come you adopt the view of the cowards and propose to yield?”

“What about the numerous people in the six districts of ours?” replied Zhou Yu. “If I were to bring upon them the misery of war they would certainly blame me. So I have decided to advise submission.”

“But with your heroism and our strong defense Cao Cao may not be able to achieve his aim,” argued Lu Su.

While the two argued with each other, Zhuge Liang just looked on with folded arms, smiling coldly at them. Presently Zhou Yu asked him why he smiled like that and he replied, “I am laughing at none other than Lu Su, who knows nothing of the affairs of the day.”

“What do you mean, sir?” asked Lu Su.

“The commander’s intention to submit is perfectly reasonable,” said Zhuge Liang.

“There, you see,” exclaimed Zhou Yu. “Zhuge Liang understands how things are. I knew he would agree with me.”

“How come you, too, suddenly talk like that?” said Lu Su angrily to Zhuge Liang.

“Cao Cao is an excellent commander, so good that no one dares oppose him,” replied Zhuge Liang. “In the past only Lu Bu, the Yuan brothers, and Liu Biao attempted it, but they have all been exterminated. Now he has no opponents in the whole country except Liu Bei, who was so stubbornly impractical that he vigorously defied him, with the result that he is now isolated in Jiangxia and in a very perilous state. The commander’s decision to submit is to secure the safety of one’s family and to win riches and honor for oneself. But the dignity of the country is not worth consideration. Just leave that to Heaven.”

Lu Su cried indignantly: “You want our lord to bend his knee before that traitor!”

“Well, there is another way, and a much easier way, too,” continued Zhuge Liang. “There will be no need to ‘lead sheep and carry pots of wine’ for presents, nor to yield territory and surrender seals of office, nor even to cross the river yourselves. All you need is a simple messenger and a small boat to ferry a couple of people across the river. If Cao Cao only got these two persons his million men would take off their armor, furl their banners, and withdraw.”

“Who are these two persons that can make Cao Cao go away like that?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Two insignificant persons who can be easily spared from this populous country,” answered Zhuge Liang, deliberately holding back the names. “They will not be missed any more than a leaf from a tree or a grain of millet from a granary. But if Cao Cao could only get them he would certainly leave rejoicing.”

“But who are the two, anyway?” persisted Zhou Yu.

Zhuge Liang said, “When I was back in my home village I heard that Cao Cao was building a tower by the Zhang River called the Tower of the Bronze Bird. It is going to be a most magnificent building and he has sought throughout the country for the most beautiful maidens to dwell in it. As you know, Cao Cao is a man given to lust. Now he knows that there are two beauties in your place, born of the Qiao family. So beautiful are these women that at sight of them, birds alight and fishes drown, the moon hides her face and flowers blush for shame. Cao Cao has vowed to do two things—one is to wipe out all his adversaries and establish his own empire; the other is to get the two Qiao girls and keep them in the Tower of the Bronze Bird to amuse him in his old age. Given these two things, he said he would die without regret. In fact, his real aim in coming down with such a huge army against your country is to obtain these two beauties.

“Why, General, all you need to do is to find their father so as to buy them from him with a thousand gold pieces and send them over to Cao Cao. The object of the expedition being attained, he will certainly withdraw satisfied. This is the scheme that Fan Li* of Yue once used when he sent the beauty Xi Shi to the king of Wu in the old days. Why not do it quickly?”

“How do you know he so greatly desires these two maidens?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Because his youngest son, Cao Zhi, who is an able writer, at the command of his father wrote a poem entitled ‘Ode to the Bronze Bird Tower’ in which he focuses on the themes of

their family's fitness to obtain the throne and the determination to get the two Qiao girls."

"Do you remember the poem?" asked Zhou Yu.

"I liked its beautiful language so I made an effort to learn it by heart," replied Zhuge Liang.

"Pray recite it for me," said Zhou Yu.

Then Zhuge Liang recited the poem in full:

Let me follow our wise ruler in pursuit of pleasure,

And ascend the terraced tower to gladden my heart,
I see the wide extent of the heavenly palace,
And gaze upon the plans of his virtuous soul.

The exalted gates rise high as hills,
The double watchtowers pierce the blue vault
It stands so beautifully in the midst of the heavens,
And ranges with the lofty pavilions of the west city,
Overlooking the rolling waves of the Zhang River,
And the abundance of fruits in the nearby orchards.

The two turrets, one on either flank,
This named Jade Dragon, and that Golden Phoenix.

Holding in his arms the two Qiao beauties from the southeast
He enjoys morn and eve in their company.

He looks down at the grand beauty of an imperial city,
And glances up at the floating clouds.

He rejoices at the multitude of scholars that assemble
In answer to the felicitous dream of the winged bear
He breathes harmony in the warm spring breeze
And listens to the doleful songs of the birds
The lofty tower stands erect beneath the sky
The double wishes of the family are blessed with success.

His benevolence pours out over all the world,
His capital is bathed in solemn dignity.

Even the richly prosperous rules of Han and Wen
Cannot compare with his wise and sensible reign.

What fortune! What beauty!

The gracious kindness spreads afar,

Our imperial house is supported by all
And peace reigns over the entire land.

Bounded only by the universe,
Bright as the glory of the sun and moon,
Ever honorable and ever enduring,
Our ruler will live to the age of the Eastern Emperor.
With dragon banners he travels to the farthest limit
In phoenix chariot he returns home from afar.

His benevolence is felt throughout the four seas,
His state prospers and his people live in affluence.
May the tower endure for ever and ever,
May joy never cease through all the ages.

Zhou Yu listened to the end and then flew up in a rage. He left his seat and, pointing to the north, he cried, "You old rascal—this insult is too deep!"

Zhuge Liang hastily rose too and, as if to soothe him, said, "But remember when the nomads constantly invaded the Han borders, the Emperor gave their sultan a princess as wife. That was the price of peace. You surely should not grudge two women from the common folks."

"You do not know, sir," said Zhou Yu. "These two women you mentioned—the elder is the widow of General Sun Ce and the younger is my wife!"

Zhuge Liang feigned the greatest astonishment and apologized profusely, "No, indeed, I did not know. I have certainly blundered. It is unforgivable! I deserve death!"

"One of us has to go, either the old rebel or I—we will not both live," cried Zhou Yu.

"Well, you had better give it more thought before you decide," cautioned Zhuge Liang. "Otherwise you may regret it later."

Zhou Yu replied, "General Sun Ce, our late lord, placed a great trust in me. I will never submit to Cao Cao. What I said just now was only to test you. In fact, when I left the lake I

was already thinking of attacking the north, and nothing can change my mind, not even when the sword or the ax is on my neck. But I trust you will help me and we will smite Cao Cao together."

"If you trust me I will be happy enough to render such humble services as I can," said Zhuge Liang. "Perhaps I might be able to offer a plan to oppose him."

"I will see my lord tomorrow to discuss this matter," said Zhou Yu. Then Zhuge Liang and Lu Su left.

Early the next morning Sun Quan went to the council chamber, where his officials, both civil and military, were already assembled. They numbered about three score in all. The civil, with Zhang Zhao at their head, were on the right while the military, with Cheng Pu as their leader, were ranged on the left. All were in full ceremonial attire and the pendants or swords they wore clanked as they moved. Soon Zhou Yu entered to pay his respects and Sun Quan received him with gracious greetings.

Zhou Yu said, "I hear that Cao Cao is encamped on the river and has sent a letter to you. I wonder what your opinion is, my lord."

Sun Quan showed him the letter. After reading it through Zhou Yu said with a smile, "The old rebel must think there are no able men on our land that he dares insult us so."

"What do you think?" asked Sun Quan.

"Have you discussed this with the officials?" asked Zhou Yu.

“We have been discussing this for days. Some advise me to surrender, and others urge me to fight. I cannot make up my mind and therefore I have asked you to come and decide it for me.”

“Who has advised you to surrender?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Zhang Zhao and the other civil advisors.”

Zhou Yu then turned to Zhang Zhao and said, “I would like to hear why you are for surrender, sir.”

Zhang Zhao replied, “Cao Cao has been attacking all his rivals in the name of the Emperor, who is entirely under his control. Every time he starts an expedition he declares he is acting with a decree from the government. His latest occupation of Jingzhou has further increased his strength. Our only defense against him is the river, but now he also has a fleet of thousands of boats, so he can attack us both on land and on water. How can we hope to withstand him? Therefore I advise our lord to submit for the present and wait till some chance is offered later.”

“This is but the opinion of a pedant,” said Zhou Yu. “How can we think of abandoning this country that we have held for three generations?”

“If so,” said Sun Quan, “what do you propose to do?”

“Though Cao Cao assumes the title of prime minister of the empire, he is actually a rebel. You, General, are a genius in warfare and a brave warrior. From your father and brother you have inherited the vast territory of Wu and Yue. You

command a good army and possess plentiful supplies. It is time for you to overrun the whole country and rid it of every evil. There is no reason why you should surrender to a rebel.

"Moreover, Cao Cao has undertaken this campaign in defiance of all the rules of war. First, the north is unsubdued and his rear is threatened by Ma Teng and Han Sui, yet he persists in his southern expeditions. Secondly, the northern men are unused to fighting on water; yet he is relinquishing his well-tried cavalry and trusting to his fleet to fight us. Thirdly, we are now in the middle of winter and the weather is at its coldest, so there will be no fodder for his horses. Fourthly, his soldiers, who have been driven far away from the north to march in a wet country among lakes and rivers, will find themselves in an alien climate and are likely to fall ill. Since Cao Cao has violated so many rules of war, his defeat is certain, however numerous his army. This is your very chance to capture Cao Cao. Give me several hundred thousand veterans and I will go and destroy him."

Sun Quan, greatly inspired, rose to his feet and said, "The rebellious old rascal has been longing for years to overthrow the Hans and set himself up as emperor. Now he has eliminated all those he feared, save only myself. I swear I will fight it out with him till one of us perishes. Your proposal of going to war against him, my good General, is just what I think. Heaven has certainly sent you to my assistance."

"I will fight to the death for you," said Zhou Yu, "and never shrink from any sacrifice but I fear, my lord, you might not have made up your mind."

Sun Quan drew the sword that hung at his side and slashed a corner off the table in front of him, exclaiming, “Let any man mention surrender again and he shall suffer the same fate as this table.”

Then he handed the sword to Zhou Yu and appointed him commander-in-chief of his army. Cheng Pu became second in command and Lu Su was nominated as his aide. In conclusion Sun Quan said, “With this sword you are authorized to slay any civil or military official who dares disobey your commands.”

Zhou Yu took the sword, and turning to the assembly said, “You have all heard. Our lord has charged me to lead you to destroy Cao Cao. I want you all to assemble at the riverside camp tomorrow to receive my orders. Should anyone be late or absent, full military law will be enforced—he will be punished according to the seven prohibitions and the fifty-four penalties.”

After taking leave of Sun Quan he left the chamber. The others said nothing but dispersed.

When Zhou Yu reached his own place he sent for Zhuge Liang for consultation. He told him of the decision that had been taken and asked him for a good plan to deal with Cao Cao.

“But your master is still in doubt,” said Zhuge Liang. “We cannot make our plans now.”

“What do you mean?” asked Zhou Yu.

“In his heart he is still fearful of Cao Cao’s massive numbers and is worried that they might be too much for your small army to overcome. You will have to explain away those numbers and bring him to a final decision before anything can be effected.”

“You are absolutely right,” agreed Zhou Yu and he went to see his master again that night.

Sun Quan said, “It must be something of real importance that has brought you here tonight.”

“I am going to deploy our forces tomorrow,” said Zhou Yu. “Do you still have any doubts in your heart, my lord?”

“Well, I am a bit nervous about the disparity in number between our army and his,” said Sun Quan. “That is my only doubt.”

“I have come specially to remove this doubt of yours. Let me explain. Cao Cao’s letter speaks of a million soldiers both on land and water, and that makes you feel so worried that you no longer try to find out his real strength. In fact, his own force from the central areas amounts to only 150–160,000, and all of them have long been fatigued. Then he got some 70–80,000 men from the Yuans, but many of those are still doubtful and unwilling to fight. Now these two forces combined may seem a great many but as they are either exhausted or doubtful, they are not at all fearsome. I can smash them with 50,000 men. So, there is no need to worry, my lord.”

Sun Quan patted his general on the back and said, “You have certainly explained away my doubt. Zhang Zhao is no strategist and has failed me completely. Only you and Lu Su have a real understanding of my heart. Tomorrow you two and Cheng Pu can pick your troops and start the expedition at once. I will follow with a strong reserve force with plentiful supplies to support you. If anything goes awry you can at once call for aid from me and I will fight a decisive battle with Cao Cao myself.”

Zhou Yu thanked him and left, but deep in his heart he felt uneasy. He thought, “So Zhuge Liang had already guessed what was on my master’s mind. He’s too clever for me and will eventually be a danger to us. I’d better put him out of the way now.”

So that very night he sent a messenger to ask Lu Su to come to him and told him what he intended to do. Lu Su, however, did not approve.

“Oh, no,” Lu Su objected. “It’s self-destructive to make away with your ablest advisor before Cao Cao is destroyed.”

“But he’s Liu Bei’s man and will surely be a threat to us,” said Zhou Yu.

“Zhuge Jin is his elder brother,” said Lu Su. “You can ask him to persuade Zhuge Liang to come over to our side. Wouldn’t it be an excellent thing?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Zhou Yu.

The next morning Zhou Yu went to his camp and took his seat in the council tent. On both sides stood guards holding swords or axes. And the officers assembled to listen to his orders.

All came except Cheng Pu, who being older than Zhou Yu, was angry at his inferior position. So he stayed away from the assembly, excusing himself as indisposed, and sent his son instead to represent him.

Zhou Yu addressed the gathering: “The law knows no partiality and you must all attend to your own duties. Cao Cao is now more of a tyrant than Dong Zhuo. He has imprisoned the Emperor in the capital and assembled a most cruel army on our borders. I have received a command to destroy Cao Cao and you must all strive to press forward. Remember also that the army must not inflict hardship on the people. Rewards for good services and punishments for faults will be given impartially.”

Having delivered this speech he appointed Han Dang and Huang Gai as leaders of the vanguard troops. They were to advance at once with their own fleet and sail to the meeting place of the three rivers, where they were to encamp and await further orders. Then he assigned ten officers to lead five more forces, with two officers in each, to follow the van in quick succession. Another two officers were appointed inspectors to ensure that the troops mobilized in the six districts of their region would advance by land and water and reach their destination by the pre-arranged time.

Having received their orders the officers left the camp to busy themselves with preparations, getting ready the boats and

arms for the expedition. Cheng Pu's son returned home and told his father about how well Zhou Yu had deployed the troops. Cheng Pu was greatly surprised. "I have always despised Zhou Yu as a mere weakling who would never become a true general," he said, "but this shows that he has the talent of a fine commander. I must support him." So he went over to the headquarters to apologize. For his part, Zhou Yu thanked him modestly for his assistance and the two made up.

The next day Zhou Yu sent for Zhuge Jin and said to him: "Your brother is a genius, a man born to be a king's counselor. Why then does he waste his talent to serve Liu Bei? Luckily he is here at present and I hope you will use all your eloquence to persuade him to leave Liu Bei and stay with us. Thus our lord will gain wise counsel and you two brothers can be together. Wouldn't that be excellent? I hope you will go at once."

Zhuge Jin replied, "I am ashamed of the little service I have rendered since I came here. I will certainly obey your command to the best of my ability."

So saying he went away to see his brother in the guesthouse. Zhuge Liang welcomed him in, and weeping, bowed to him respectfully. Then they told each other their experiences since they parted and Zhuge Jin asked in tears, "Brother, do you remember the story of Bo Yi and Shu Qi?"

"So Zhou Yu has sent him to talk me over," thought Zhuge Liang. He replied, "Yes, they were two ancient saints."

“Those two brothers would never part, even when perishing of hunger at the foot of the Shouyang Hills. You and I were born of the same mother and suckled at the same breast, yet we serve different masters and are thus separated from each other. Shouldn’t we feel ashamed when we think of Bo Yi and Shu Qi?”

Zhuge Liang replied, “You are speaking in terms of human love, but what I stand for is duty. We are both subjects of Han and my master Liu Bei is a descendant of the Han house. If you, brother, could leave Wu and join me in serving the rightful lord, then on the one hand we would prove ourselves to be true officials of Han and on the other we two of the same flesh and blood could be together. Thus love and duty will both be honored. What do you think of it, brother?”

“I came to persuade him,” thought Zhuge Jin, “and now I’m being persuaded.” As he had no fitting reply to make, he rose and took his leave. Returning to Zhou Yu he related to him what had happened.

“What do you think?” asked Zhou Yu.

“General Sun has treated me with great kindness and I will never turn my back on him,” replied Zhuge Jin.

“Since you decide to remain loyal, there is no need to say any more. I think I know how to deal with your brother.”

> The wisest men see eye to eye, for each but sees the right;

But should their several interests clash, they all the fiercer fight.

How Zhou Yu deals with Zhuge Liang will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* An official in the service of the king of Yue at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. After Yue was destroyed by Wu, Fan Li allegedly had the beauty Xi Shi sent to the king of Wu in the hope that the latter would slacken his vigilance against possible revenge from Yue. Ten years later, Wu was overthrown by Yue.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Cao Cao Suffers Defeat at the Junction of Three Rivers

Jiang Gan Is Tricked at a Gathering of Heroes

Zhou Yu was very much annoyed after hearing Zhuge Jin's words and a hatred for Zhuge Liang took root in his heart. He nourished a secret resolve to do away with him.

The following day when all his officers and men were mustered and ready, he went to bid farewell to his lord.

"You go first," said Sun Quan. "I will soon follow with reinforcements." Zhou Yu took his leave and then, with Cheng Pu and Lu Su, set out with the troops. Before he started, however, he invited Zhuge Liang to accompany them and as the latter cheerfully agreed, the four of them embarked on the same ship. They set sail and the fleet headed for Xiakou. About sixty li from the junction of the three rivers the fleet anchored and the men encamped on the bank beneath the Western Hills. Zhou Yu's tent was set in the middle, surrounded by his troops, but Zhuge Liang took up his quarters in a small boat.

When all the camping arrangements were complete, Zhou Yu sent someone to invite Zhuge Liang to his tent for counsel. After an exchange of greetings Zhou Yu said, "Cao Cao had

fewer troops than Yuan Shao. He nevertheless overcame him because he followed Xu You's advice and destroyed Yuan Shao's grain supplies first. Now Cao Cao has over 830,000 men, while we have but a little over 50,000. In order to defeat him his supplies must be destroyed first. I have found out that his main depot is at the Iron Hill. As you have lived here for a long time you must be familiar with the topography of this region. I would like to trouble you to go tonight with your officers, like Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun, and cut off his grain supplies. I will assist you with a thousand men. As we are both working for our masters, I hope you will not refuse."

Zhuge Liang saw through this at once. He thought to himself, "He saw that I could not be persuaded so he wants to kill me. If I refuse he will laugh at me. Better agree now and then find some means to thwart him." Therefore he quickly accepted the task, much to the joy of Zhou Yu.

After he had taken his leave, Lu Su asked Zhou Yu secretly, "Why have you set him this task?"

"Because I want to kill him," replied Zhou Yu, "but I fear others may laugh at me. So I'm sending him to his death at the hands of Cao Cao to prevent him from doing any mischief in the future."

Lu Su left and went to Zhuge Liang to ascertain whether he suspected anything. He found him busy preparing for the troops to set out, looking quite unconcerned. As he felt rather sorry for him, Lu Su tried to warn him with a meaningful question, "Do you think this expedition will succeed?"

Zhuge Liang replied with a smile, “I’m adept at all sorts of fighting, be it on water, on foot, on horseback, or in chariots. There is no doubt of my success. I’m not like you and Zhou Yu, only capable of one thing.”

“What do you mean?” asked Lu Su.

Zhuge Liang replied, “I have heard that the street boys in your country chant this: ‘To lay an ambush, hold a pass, Lu Su is the man to choose; but when fighting on water, Zhou Yu is the man to use.’ You are only fit for laying ambushes and guarding passes, while he is only skillful at fighting on water.”

Lu Su carried this story to Zhou Yu, who exclaimed angrily, “How dare he flout me and say that I can’t fight a land battle? I don’t want him to go. I will go myself with 10,000 men and cut off Cao Cao’s supplies.”

Lu Su went back and told this to Zhuge Liang, who smiled and said, “He sent me on this expedition because he wants Cao Cao to kill me. And so I teased him with that little chant, but it was already too much for him to bear. Now we are at a critical moment and we need every man we have. As long as our two sides act in unity we will succeed, whereas if each one tries to harm the other the whole scheme will fail. Cao Cao is no fool and is very good at cutting off an enemy’s supplies. Surely he has taken double precautions against any surprise attack on his own depot. If Zhou Yu goes, he will be taken prisoner. What he ought to do now is to bring about a decisive naval battle, so as to dishearten the northern men, and then find some other means to defeat them completely. I hope you can convince him about what his best course is.”

Without loss of time, Lu Su went to Zhou Yu to relate what Zhuge Liang had told him. As he listened to it, Zhou Yu shook his head and stamped his feet in dismay.

"This man is far too clever, ten times cleverer than me. He must die or we will suffer in the future."

Lu Su said, "This is the moment when every man counts. You must place what is good for the country above all else. Once Cao Cao is defeated you can deal with him."

Zhou Yu consented.

It is now time to return to Liu Bei. He had ordered his nephew Liu Qi to hold Jiangxia, while he and the bulk of the army returned to Xiakou. One day he saw the opposite bank thick with banners and glittering with spears and halberds. He knew then that the troops from Wu had arrived. So he moved all his force from Jiangxia to Fankou.

Then he assembled his men and said to them, "Kongming went to Wu some time ago but no word has come from him so far. I wonder how things stand now. Who will go and find out for me?"

"I will," volunteered Mi Zhu. So presents were prepared and Mi Zhu set out for Wu to gather information, under the pretext of offering some reward to the army. He sailed downstream in a small boat and presently came to Zhou Yu's tent. The soldiers reported his arrival to Zhou Yu, who ordered him to be brought in. Mi Zhu bowed low to the commander, conveyed his master's respects, and presented

the gifts. Zhou Yu accepted them and then gave a banquet in honor of his guest.

Mi Zhu said, “Zhuge Liang has been here a long time and I hope he can return with me.”

Zhou Yu replied, “He and I are making plans to worst Cao Cao. How can he go back now? I also would like to see your master so that we may discuss our plans together, but my duty as a commander does not allow me to get away, even for a moment. If your master would only come here I would be most gratified.”

Mi Zhu agreed to take the message to his master and took his leave.

After he had gone, Lu Su asked, “Why do you want to invite Liu Bei here?”

Zhou Yu said, “Liu Bei is a most ambitious and dangerous man and must be removed. I’m taking this opportunity to persuade him to come, and when he is slain a great danger will cease to threaten our country.”

Lu Su tried to dissuade him but Zhou Yu would not listen to what he said. He went on with his plot to kill Liu Bei. Fifty guards were ordered in secret to hide themselves behind the curtains of his tent. When Liu Bei arrived, they were to come out and slay him—the signal would be the dropping of a cup.

Meanwhile Mi Zhu had returned and told Liu Bei of Zhou Yu’s desire to see him. Suspecting nothing, Liu Bei at once

ordered his men to prepare a fast vessel to take him there without loss of time.

However, Guan Yu was opposed to his going. He said, “Zhou Yu is artful and can’t be trusted. Besides, Zhuge Liang has sent no word about this meeting.”

Liu Bei replied, “I have joined my forces to theirs in this attack on our common enemy. Now Zhou Yu wishes to see me and it will not be the right response of an ally if I refuse to go. Nothing will succeed if both sides hold suspicions.”

“If you really want to go, then I’ll go with you,” said Guan Yu.

“And so will I,” cried Zhang Fei.

But Liu Bei said that Guan Yu alone was enough to accompany him, for he was only leaving for a short time. He ordered Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun to guard their camp and Jian Yong to hold the nearby town of Erxian.

So after issuing these orders, Liu Bei embarked with his brother on a small ship. They were escorted by just twenty soldiers. The light craft traveled very quickly down the river. Liu Bei rejoiced greatly at the sight of the vessels of Wu anchored neatly by the bank, the soldiers in armor and all the pomp and panoply of war. Everything was in excellent order.

His arrival was at once reported to Zhou Yu.

“How many ships has he brought with him?” asked Zhou Yu.

"Only one," replied the guards, "and some twenty attendants."

Zhou Yu laughed, "His fate is sealed." He sent for the executioners at once and ordered them to conceal themselves inside his tent, and when all was arranged for the assassination he contemplated, he went out to welcome his visitor. Liu Bei came with Guan Yu and his attendants to Zhou Yu's tent. After the greetings Zhou Yu asked his guest to take the seat of honor, but Liu Bei declined, saying, "General, you are famous throughout the country while I am a man of no talent. I cannot accept such great honor."

So they took their seats as host and guest and a banquet was given to entertain Liu Bei.

Now it so happened that Zhuge Liang came on shore by chance and heard that his master had arrived to meet Zhou Yu. The news gave him a great shock and he hastened to Zhou Yu's tent to steal a look inside. He saw murder written on Zhou Yu's face and noted the many assassins hidden behind the curtains. "What's to be done now?" he said to himself in distress. He turned to look at Liu Bei, and much to his surprise, he found him laughing and talking quite unconcernedly. Then he noticed the figure of Guan Yu standing behind Liu Bei, with his hand on his sword.

He was greatly relieved. "There will be no danger for my master," he said joyfully. He decided not to go in, but returned to the riverbank to wait for his master there.

Meanwhile, the banquet proceeded. After the wine had gone around several times Zhou Yu got up to pour wine for his

guest when he suddenly saw a powerful warrior behind Liu Bei, sword in hand. He hastily asked who he was.

“That is my brother, Guan Yu,” replied Liu Bei.

Greatly startled, Zhou Yu asked, “Is he the one who killed Yan Liang and Wen Chou?”

“Exactly,” replied Liu Bei.

Fear gripped Zhou Yu and he broke into a cold sweat, which trickled down his back. Then he poured out a cup of wine and presented it to Guan Yu.

Soon Lu Su came in and Liu Bei said to him, “Where is Zhuge Liang? Could I trouble you to ask him to come?”

“Wait till we have defeated Cao Cao,” said Zhou Yu. Liu Bei dared not repeat his request. Guan Yu gave him a meaningful look and Liu Bei, taking the hint, rose and said, “I must leave now but I will come again to congratulate you when our enemy is defeated and our success is complete.”

Zhou Yu did not press him to remain. He escorted his guest to the gate of his camp, where Liu Bei took leave of his host and headed toward the shore. When he and his group reached there they found Zhuge Liang waiting in their ship. Liu Bei was exceedingly pleased.

Zhuge Liang said, “Do you know you were in great danger today?”

“Why, no,” answered Liu Bei in amazement.

“If Yun-chang had not been there you would have been killed,” said Zhuge Liang.

Liu Bei, after a moment’s reflection, saw that it was true. He begged Zhuge Liang to return with him to Fankou, but the advisor refused.

“I am quite safe,” he said. “Although I am living in the tiger’s mouth, I am as steady as Mount Tai. Now, my lord, return and prepare your ships and men. On the twentieth day of the eleventh month send Zi-long with a small boat to the south bank to wait for me. Be sure there is no mistake.”

When Liu Bei asked him what he meant by this, he only replied, “When the southeasterly wind begins to blow I will return.”

Liu Bei would have questioned him further, but Zhuge Liang exhorted him to leave at once. After Zhuge Liang went off Liu Bei and the others started the boat up the river toward home. They had not proceeded far when there appeared a small fleet of some fifty boats sweeping down with the current, and in the prow of the leading vessel stood a tall figure armed with a spear. It was Zhang Fei, who had come to assist them for fear that something might happen to Liu Bei and Guan Yu alone might not be able to rescue him. The three brothers then returned together.

After seeing off Liu Bei, Zhou Yu returned to his camp. Lu Su soon came in and asked, “Since you had cajoled Liu Bei into coming, why didn’t you kill him?”

“Because of that Guan Yu. He is a very tiger and he never left his brother for a moment. If I had attempted to kill his brother he would certainly have taken my life.”

Just then it was announced that Cao Cao had sent a messenger to deliver a letter. Zhou Yu ordered the guards to bring him in and took the letter. But when he saw the signature, “From the Prime Minister of Han to Commander Zhou,” he fell into a frenzy of rage. Without so much as opening it, he tore the letter to shreds and threw them on the ground. Then he ordered the messenger to be killed at once.

Lu Su tried to reason with him: “When two countries are at war their emissaries are not to be slain.”

“I slay the messenger to show our strength,” replied Zhou Yu.

So the bearer of the letter was decapitated and his head sent back to Cao Cao by the victim’s attendants. Zhou Yu then decided to move into action. Gan Ning was appointed leader of the van, supported by two wings under Han Dang and Jiang Qin, while Zhou Yu himself was to follow with the main force. The next morning they had an early meal at the fourth watch and by the fifth watch the ships hoisted sail and set out amid loud shouting and the beating of drums.

Cao Cao was furious when he heard that his letter had been torn up and his envoy slain. He, too, resolved to attack his opponent. His advance was led by Cai Mao, Zhang Yun, and the other Jingzhou officers who had recently joined his army, whereas he himself followed in the rear. They sailed as fast as possible to the meeting place of the rivers, where they soon saw the ships of Wu sailing toward them. In the prow of the

foremost ship stood a fierce warrior who cried, “I am Gan Ning. Who dares to fight with me?”

Cai Mao sent his younger brother to accept the challenge, but as his ship approached Gan Ning shot an arrow and the man was killed instantly. With this victory, Gan Ning’s fleet pressed forward while his archers kept up a heavy discharge of arrows that forced their enemy to retreat. The two wings also joined in and the three forces charged into Cao Cao’s fleet. Being mostly from the dry plains of the north, Cao Cao’s men did not know how to fight effectively on water, and they could hardly keep their footing once the ships moved. The three southern officers, reinforced soon by their commander, Zhou Yu, had the battle all their own way. It lasted till the afternoon and a countless number of Cao Cao’s men were killed by arrows or cannon. Although he had won, Zhou Yu thought it more prudent to call off the fight, in view of the superior numbers of his enemy. So he ordered his men to beat the gongs as a signal to cease battle and recall the ships.

The defeated men also returned. Cao Cao went to his camp on the bank and redeployed his force. Then he sent for Cai Mao and Zhang Yun and reproached them: “How could you be worsted by the inferior force of Wu? You did not do your best.”

Cai Mao tried to defend himself. “The Jingzhou marines have not been drilled for a long time,” he said, “while the northern men have never been trained for naval warfare at all. That was why we were defeated. Now we must set up a naval camp, placing the northern men in the center and the Jingzhou

men on the flanks. Drill them every day until they are familiar with fighting on water. Then they will win victories."

"If you know what should be done, why have you not done it?" said Cao Cao. "What is the use of telling me this? Get to work."

So Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went off to train their naval force. They established twenty-four "water gates" along the riverbank, with the large ships outside as a sort of rampart, and under their protection the smaller ships could move about freely inside. At night when the lanterns and torches were lit the very sky was illuminated and the water shone red with the glare. On land the smoke of the camp fires could be traced for 300 li without a break.

Zhou Yu returned triumphantly to camp. He feasted his victorious fighting men and sent a messenger to take the joyful tidings of victory to his master. When night fell Zhou Yu went up to the top of a hill to survey the enemy camp. He saw to his fear a long line of bright lights stretching to the west, showing the extent of the enemy's camp. The next day, Zhou Yu decided that he would go in person to find out the strength of his enemy's naval force. So he prepared a double-decker vessel and sailed upstream, accompanied by musicians and drummers, as well as several of his brave officers armed with powerful bows and crossbows. When they got opposite Cao Cao's camp the heavy stones that served as anchors were lowered and the drums and trumpets began to play while Zhou Yu scanned the enemy's naval camp. What he saw gave him a big fright, for his enemy seemed to know everything about training a navy. He asked

his men who the commanders of Cao Cao's navy were and was told that they were Cai Mao and Zhang Yun.

"They have lived in these parts for a long time," he said, "and are thoroughly experienced in naval warfare. I must find some means to remove them first."

Meanwhile, his movement was discovered and reported to Cao Cao, who immediately ordered out some ships to capture him. When he saw the commotion in the center of the naval force Zhou Yu hastily gave the order to put to sea. Oarsmen on all sides rowed as fast as they could and the vessel shot speedily downstream. Before Cao Cao's ships had got underway, Zhou Yu was already far away. The chase was futile.

Cao Cao summoned his officers and asked, "The other day we lost a battle and the soldiers were greatly dispirited. Now the enemy has spied on our camp. What can be done?"

Before he had finished a man stepped forth and said, "When I was young Zhou Yu and I were fellow students and close friends. I would like to use all my eloquence to persuade him to submit."

Cao Cao was delighted to hear this. He looked at the speaker and recognized him to be Jiang Gan of Jiujiang, one of his secretaries.

"Are you a good friend of Zhou Yu's?" asked Cao Cao.

"Rest assured, sir," replied Jiang Gan. "I will not fail."

“What do you need to take with you?” asked Cao Cao.

“Just a serving lad and a couple of people to row the boat. Nothing else.”

Cao Cao, greatly pleased, offered him wine and sent him on his mission.

Clad in a simple cloth headpiece and a robe, the messenger sailed in a small boat to Zhou Yu’s camp where he asked the guards to report to their commander that his old friend Jiang Gan wished to see him.

Zhou Yu was in his tent at a council when the message of his arrival came, and he laughed as he said to those about him, “They have sent someone to persuade me.” Then he whispered certain instructions in the ear of each one of them and they took the orders and left.

Zhou Yu went to receive his friend in full ceremonial garb, escorted by a crowd of followers in rich silken robes. The guest appeared, his sole attendant being a lad dressed in a plain blue gown. He bore himself proudly as he advanced and Zhou Yu bowed his welcome.

“You’ve been well, I hope, since we last met,” said Jiang Gan.

“You must have suffered much, my friend, crossing rivers and lakes from afar to be Cao Cao’s emissary,” said Zhou Yu.

“I haven’t seen you for a very long time,” said the envoy, much taken aback, “and I came to visit you for old times’ sake. Why do you call me an emissary of Cao Cao?”

“Though I’m not so clever a musician as Shi Kuang,* yet I can comprehend the thought behind the music,” replied Zhou Yu.

“As you choose to treat your old friend like this I think I will take my leave,” said Jiang Gan.

Zhou Yu laughed and, taking his guest by the arm, said, “Well, I feared you might have come on his behalf to try to persuade me. But if this is not your intention, you needn’t go away in such a hurry.”

So the two entered the tent, where they exchanged salutes and took their seats. Then the civil and military officials were called in to be introduced to the guest. They soon appeared, all dressed in their best finery—even the minor officers were clad in glittering silver armor. The staff looked very imposing as they stood ranged in two lines. The visitor was introduced to them all. Presently a banquet was spread out, and while they feasted the musicians played songs of victory and wine was passed around. Under its mellowing influence Zhou Yu’s reserve seemed to thaw as he said, “He is a fellow student of mine and we are close friends. Though he is from the north he has not come to speak for Cao Cao, so you need not be suspicious of him.”

Then he took off the sword which he wore at his side and handed it to Taishi Ci, saying, “You take this and wear it for the day as master of the feast. Today we talk only about

friendship, and if anyone dares to mention the war between Cao Cao and our country, just slay him."

Taishi Ci took the sword and seated himself at the table. Jiang Gan was frightened and dared not utter a word about his mission.

Then Zhou Yu said, "Since I assumed command I haven't tasted a single drop of wine, but today as my old friend is present and there is no distrust between us, I'm going to drink freely." So saying, he drank a huge goblet and laughed loudly.

The rhinoceros cups went swiftly round from one to another till all were half drunk. Then Zhou Yu, laying hold of the guest's hand, led him outside the tent. The guards who stood around all stood to attention, holding spears or halberds.

"Don't you think my soldiers are a fine lot of fellows?" asked Zhou Yu.

"Strong as bears and bold as tigers, they are," replied Jiang Gan.

Then Zhou Yu led him to the rear of the tent to show him the grain and forage piled up in mountainous heaps. "Don't you think I have a fairly good store of grain and forage?"

"Just as I have heard, your men are brave and your supplies ample."

Zhou Yu pretended to be quite intoxicated and went on: "When you and I were students together, we never anticipated a day like this, did we?"

"For a genius like you it's nothing extraordinary," said the guest.

Zhou Yu again seized his hand and said, "When a true warrior has found his rightful lord to serve, he is tied to him by the same bond as between an official and his prince, or like that between close relatives. His words are followed, his plans adopted, and he shares all good or evil fortunes with his master. Even if such persuasive speakers as Su Qin and Zhang Yi should come back to life, with an eloquence like rushing torrents and a tongue as sharp as a sword, it is not possible to sway me in my loyalty to my lord." He burst into a loud laugh as he finished and Jiang Gan's face turned the color of clay.

Zhou Yu then led his guest back into the tent and again they fell to drinking. Presently he pointed to the others at the table and said, "These are all the best and bravest of the land of Wu. You might call this gathering a meeting of heroes."

They drank till evening, when candles were lit. Zhou Yu rose, offered some sword play, then sang this song:

When a man lives in the world, O,

He ought to make his name.

And when he's made his name, O,
He'll have released his dream.

And when I have realized my dream,
O, I'll quaff my wine with zest.

And when I'm drunk as drunk can be,
I'll sing the madman's chant.

A burst of applause greeted the song. By this time it was getting late and the guest begged to be excused. "The wine is too much for me," he said. Zhou Yu told his men to clear the table and as all the others left he said to his guest, "It's many a day since I shared a couch with you, but we'll do so tonight."

Putting on an appearance of utter intoxication, he led Jiang Gan into the tent to rest. Once inside, he simply fell into bed fully dressed, emitting uncouth grunts and groans. It was impossible for Jiang Gan to get any sleep. He lay there and listened—outside the gong sounded for the second watch. He rose and, by the dim light of the small lamp, he looked at his friend and found him fast asleep, snoring thunderously. He also saw on the table a heap of papers and, looking at them furtively, found they were letters. Among them he saw one marked as coming from Cai Mao and Zhang Yun. Greatly startled, he read it stealthily and this is what it said:

> ... It was not for rank or for money that we surrendered to Cao Cao but we were driven by circumstances to do so. Now we have fooled these northern men and entrapped them in the center of the naval camp. As soon as occasion offers, we will slay Cao Cao and present his head to you. We will be sending you another report soon. Please trust us. This is our humble reply to your letter.

“So those two are spies of Wu!” thought Jiang Gan. He secretly put the letter in his robe and was about to examine the other papers when Zhou Yu turned over in his bed. He hastily blew out the light and went to the couch. Zhou Yu was muttering as he lay there and his guest, carefully listening, made out: “Zi-ye (Jiang Gan), I’m going to let you see Cao Cao’s head in a day or two.”

Jiang Gan mumbled something in reply and Zhou Yu said again: “Wait a few days … you will see … Cao Cao’s head. The old wretch!”

Jiang Gan tried to question him as to what he meant, but Zhou Yu was fast asleep and seemed to hear nothing. Jiang Gan lay on the couch, wide awake until about the fourth watch. Then someone came in, calling softly, “General, are you awake?”

At that moment, as if suddenly awakened from the deepest slumber, Zhou Yu started up and said, “Who is this on the couch?”

The voice replied, “Don’t you remember, General? You asked your old friend Jiang Gan to stay the night with you.”

“I drank too much last night,” said Zhou Yu in a remorseful tone, “and I forgot. I hope I did not say anything that I should not say.”

The voice went on, “Someone has arrived from the north.”

“Hush,” cautioned Zhou Yu, and turning toward Jiang Gan, he called him by name. But Jiang Gan affected to be sound asleep and did not answer. Zhou Yu crept out of the tent,

while Jiang Gan listened with all ears. He heard the man say, "Commanders Cai and Zhang said they had not had any chances to kill him." Then they spoke very softly, and however hard he strained his ears, he could not make out what followed.

Soon after Zhou Yu re-entered and again called him by name. But Jiang Gan gave no reply, pretending to be in the deepest slumber. Then Zhou Yu undressed and went to bed. As Jiang Gan lay awake he thought that Zhou Yu was a shrewd man, and if in the morning he found the letter had disappeared he would certainly harm him. So he waited until the fifth watch and then he called his host. Getting no reply he rose, dressed, and stole out of the tent. Then he called his servant and made for the camp gate.

"Where are you going, sir?" asked the guards at the gate.

"I fear I am in the way here," replied Jiang Gan, "so I think I had better be leaving now."

The guards did not stop him. He found his way to the riverbank and reembarked. Then, with flying oars, he hastened back to his master's camp.

When he arrived Cao Cao asked him, "How did it go?"

"Zhou Yu is very clever and perfectly high-minded," he said. "Nothing that I could say moved him in the least."

"Another failure!" said Cao Cao crossly. "He will only laugh at me."

“Well, even if I did not win over Zhou Yu, I found out something for you. Send away your attendants and I will tell you,” said Jiang Gan.

The servants were dismissed and then Jiang Gan produced the letter he had stolen from Zhou Yu’s tent. He gave it to Cao Cao, who became very angry and sent for Cai Mao and Zhang Yun at once. As soon as they appeared he said, “I want you two to start the attack.”

Cai Mao replied, “But the men are not yet sufficiently trained.”

“When they are ready you will have sent my head to Zhou Yu, eh?”

Both of them were dumbfounded, having not the slightest idea what this meant. They remained silent, for they did not know what to say. Cao Cao ordered the guards to take them out for instant execution. In a short time their heads were produced. By this time Cao Cao had thought over the matter and it dawned upon him that he had been tricked.

A poem says:

No one could stand against Cao Cao,

Of sin he had full share,
But Zhou Yu was more resourceful,
And caught him in a snare.

Two officers to save their lives,
Betrayed a former lord,

Soon after, as fate had it,
Both fell beneath the sword.

The death of these two naval commanders surprised their colleagues, who asked their master about the reason for their sudden execution. Though he knew he had been a victim, Cao Cao would not admit to it. He told them that the two men had been remiss in their duties and so had been put to death. The others were aghast, but nothing could be done. Two other officers, Mao Jie and Yu Jin, were put in command of the naval camp.

Spies took the news to Zhou Yu, who was delighted at the success of his ruse. “Those two were my only anxiety,” he said. “Now that they are gone, I have no more worries.”

Lu Su said, “You are so skilled in warfare, General. Undoubtedly Cao Cao will be defeated.”

“I don’t think any of you saw my game,” said Zhou Yu, “except Zhuge Liang. He is far cleverer than me, and I don’t think this trick could deceive him. You go and sound him out. See if he knew.”

Zhou’s trick succeeded well,

Discord sown, his foes fell.

Drunk with success was he, but sought

To know what the wise Kongming thought.

What passed between Lu Su and Zhuge Liang will be related in the next chapter.

Footnote

* A blind musician, famous for his ability to distinguish various sounds.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Zhuge Liang "Borrows" Arrows by Means of a Wonderful Scheme

Huang Gai Accepts Punishment to Implement a Secret Plan

Lu Su departed on his mission to see Zhuge Liang in his boat.

"There has been so much to do lately that I haven't been able to come to listen to your instruction," said Lu Su.

Zhuge Liang said, "And I haven't yet come to congratulate your commander."

"For what do you wish to congratulate him?"

"Why sir, just the matter he sent you to find out whether I knew about or not. Indeed, I must congratulate him on that."

Lu Su turned pale and gasped. "But how did you know, sir?" he asked.

"That trick could only fool Jiang Gan. Cao Cao has been taken in this once, but he will soon realize his mistake. Only he will not admit it. Now that the two men are gone, your country is freed from a grave anxiety. Don't you think that is a matter for congratulations? I hear Mao Jie and Yu Jin are

the new admirals, and in their hands his fleet will be doomed."

Lu Su was quite dumbfounded. He stayed a little longer, muttering something incoherently, and then took his leave. As he was leaving Zhuge Liang said, "Please don't tell Zhou Yu that I have guessed his scheme in case he should be jealous and seek some other chance to harm me."

Lu Su promised. Nevertheless, when he saw Zhou Yu he had to relate the whole thing just as it had happened.

"He really must go," said Zhou Yu. "I'm determined to put him out of the way."

"If you slay him, Cao Cao will laugh at you."

"I'll find a legitimate way to remove him so that he shall go to his death without resentment."

"But what do you mean by that?" asked Lu Su.

"Don't ask too much—you'll know soon enough," replied Zhou Yu.

The next day he summoned all the officers to his tent and then sent someone to invite Zhuge Liang, who came cheerfully. After he had taken his seat, Zhou Yu said to him: "Soon I am going to fight a battle with the enemy on water. What weapon is the best, sir?"

"On the river arrows are the best," replied Zhuge Liang.

“I quite agree with you. But at the moment we are short of arrows. I would like to trouble you to supervise the making of 100,000 of them for the battle. As it is in the interest of our two sides, I presume you will not decline.”

“Whatever task you set for me I will certainly try to perform,” replied Zhuge Liang. “But may I ask when you want these arrows?”

“Could you deliver them in ten days?”

“The enemy will be here very soon. Ten days will be too late,” said Zhuge Liang.

“How many days will it take for the arrows to be ready?”

“Let me have three days—then you may send for your 100,000 arrows.”

“Are you serious?” said Zhou Yu. “There is no joking in the army.”

“Dare I joke with you, Commander? Give me a written military order and if I fail to complete the task in three days, I will accept my punishment.”

Zhou Yu, secretly delighted, ordered the secretary to draw up a commission there and then. After that, wine was brought in and he drank to the success of the undertaking, saying, “I will reward you most handsomely when this is accomplished.”

“It is too late to do anything today so it doesn’t count,” said Zhuge Liang. “On the third day from tomorrow send five hundred soldiers to the riverside to collect the arrows.”

They drank a few more cups of wine together and then Zhuge Liang took his leave. After he had gone, Lu Su said, “Don’t you think there is some deceit in this?”

“He has signed his own death warrant,” said Zhou Yu. “I haven’t pushed him into this in the least. Now that he has asked for the formal order in front of the whole assembly, he wouldn’t be able to escape even if he grew a pair of wings. All I have to do is to order the workmen to delay him as much as they can, and not to supply him with enough materials, so that he is sure to fail. And then, who can blame me for punishing him? Now, you go and find out what he is doing and keep me informed.”

So off went Lu Su to seek Zhuge Liang, who at once reproached him for not having kept his promise. “I told you not to confess to Zhou Yu or he’d try to harm me,” he said. “But you wouldn’t keep my secret. And now this thing cropped up. How do you think I can get 100,000 arrows made in three days? You’ll simply have to save me.”

“You brought the misfortune on yourself—how can I save you?” said Lu Su.

“I want you to lend me twenty vessels, with thirty men in each. Every vessel is to have blue cotton screens and more than a thousand bundles of straw lashed to both sides. I’ll have good use for them. On the third day I’ll surely have the

arrows ready. But on no account must you let Zhou Yu know, or my scheme will be wrecked."

Lu Su consented and this time he kept his word. He went to report to his chief as usual, but he said nothing about the boats. He only said that Zhuge Liang was not using bamboo, feathers, glue, or varnish, but seemed to have some other way of getting the arrows.

"Let's await the three days' limit," said Zhou Yu, extremely puzzled.

On his part, Lu Su quietly prepared a score of light swift boats, each with a crew and the blue screens and bundles of straw in place. When these were ready, he placed them at Zhuge Liang's disposal. On the first day Zhuge Liang did nothing, nor on the second. On the third day in the middle of the fourth watch, Zhuge Liang secretly called Lu Su to his boat.

"Why have you sent for me, sir?" asked Lu Su.

"I want you to go with me to get those arrows."

"Where are we going?"

"Don't ask. You'll see."

Then the twenty boats were fastened together by long ropes and sailed toward the north bank. The night proved very foggy and the mist was even more dense on the river so that one man could scarcely see another opposite him. In spite of the blinding fog Zhuge Liang urged the boats forward.

The little fleet reached Cao Cao's naval camp at about the fifth watch. Zhuge Liang ordered the soldiers to spread out the boats in a line with their prows toward the west, and then to beat the drums and shout.

"But what shall we do if they attack us?" exclaimed Lu Su in alarm.

Zhuge Liang replied with a smile, "I think Cao Cao won't venture out in this fog—go on with your wine and let's be merry. We'll go back when the fog lifts."

As soon as the noise from the boats was heard in Cao Cao's camp, his two naval commanders hurried to report to their master, who said, "Coming up in a fog like this means that there is an ambush for us. Do not go out, but get the archers of your fleet to shoot at them."

He also sent for Zhang Liao and Xu Huang and ordered them to take 3,000 archers each from their army to aid the marines at once.

By then, the archers of the naval force had already been shooting in front of the camp to prevent the enemy's entry. Presently, the land soldiers arrived and more than 10,000 men began shooting into the river. The arrows fell like rain. By and bye, Zhuge Liang ordered the boats to turn around so that their prows pointed east, and to go closer in so that the arrows might hit them. At the same time the drums were beaten.

When the sun was high and the fog began to disperse, Zhuge Liang ordered the boats to turn around and sail downstream without delay. The straw bundles on the twenty boats were

bristling with arrows. As they left, all the crews were told to shout derisively to Cao Cao, “Thank you for the arrows.”

By the time this was reported to Cao Cao, the light boats, helped by the swift current, were a long way down the river and pursuit was impossible. Cao Cao saw that he had been duped and regretted very much, but nothing could be done about it.

On the way back Zhuge Liang said to his companion: “Every boat must have five or six thousand arrows stuck in it and so, without causing Wu the slightest effort, we must have more than 100,000 arrows that can be used to shoot back at Cao Cao’s army at the next battle. Isn’t it very convenient!”

“You are really superhuman,” said Lu Su in wonder. “But how did you know there would be a thick fog today?”

“One can only be a poor commander if he does not know the workings of Heaven and the ways of earth. One must understand the secrets of nature and the interdependence of the elements as well the mysteries of army formations. I calculated three days ago that there would be a fog today and so I set the limit at three days. Zhou Yu gave me ten days, but did not provide me with enough workmen or material. Obviously he intended to blame me for delay and put me to death, but my fate lies with the Absolute—how could Zhou Yu harm me?”

Lu Su could not but agree. When the boats arrived, five hundred men were in readiness on the bank to carry away the arrows. Zhuge Liang told them to collect the arrows from the boats and carry them to Zhou Yu’s tent. Lu Su went to see the

commander and related to him how Zhuge Liang had obtained the arrows.

Zhou Yu was simply amazed. Sighing sadly, he said, “His schemes and calculations are more than human. He is superior than me!”

Thick lies the fog on the river,

Nature is shrouded in white,
Distant and near are confounded,
Banks are no longer in sight.

Fast fly the pattering arrows,
Sticking in the straw of the boat.

Now can a full tale be delivered,

Kongming is victor complete.

Shortly after, Zhuge Liang went to see Zhou Yu, who came forward to greet him, saying, “How I admire your remarkable predictions.”

“There is nothing remarkable in that trifling trick,” he replied.

Then Zhou Yu invited him for a drink in his tent.

When they were drinking, Zhou Yu said, “My lord sent an envoy here yesterday to urge me to advance, but I have no master plan ready and I hope you can assist me, sir.”

“But how can I, a man of mediocre talent, have a good plan?”

“The other day I observed the enemy’s naval camp and found it extremely well organized. It will not be easy to attack. I have thought of a plan, but I am not sure if it will work. I should be grateful if you would decide for me.”

“General, do not say what your plan is,” replied Zhuge Liang. “Let each of us write on the palm of his hand and see whether our opinions agree.”

So pen and ink were brought in and Zhou Yu first wrote on his own palm, and then passed the pen to Zhuge Liang, who also wrote on his palm. Then moving their chairs closer, each showed his hand to the other, and both burst out laughing, for both had written the same word—“fire.”

“Since we are of the same opinion,” said Zhou Yu, “there is no longer any doubt. But this must be kept secret.”

“Certainly,” answered Zhuge Liang. “This is in the interest of our two sides and I will never dream of revealing it. Although I have used this scheme twice on Cao Cao, I do not think he will be on his guard against this. You can put your scheme into force.”

They finished their wine and separated. None of the officers knew anything of their commander’s plan.

Now Cao Cao, having lost a myriad arrows for nothing, felt very sore. His advisor Xun You proposed a scheme. “Now Sun Quan has the two able strategists Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang to help him, it is not so easy to overcome him in a short time. Let us send someone there who will pretend to surrender to them but will actually be our spy and pass

information to us. Once we know what our enemy is doing, we can plan their destruction."

"I have been thinking of that myself," replied Cao Cao. "Who do you think is the right man to send?"

"Cai Mao has been put to death, but the other members of his clan are in the army and his two cousins are junior officers. You can win them over by treating them well and then send them to Wu. They will not arouse suspicion at all."

Cao Cao decided to act on this plan and in the evening summoned the two men to his tent, where he told them what he wanted them to do. And he promised them rich rewards if they succeeded. "But do not betray me," he added.

"Our families are here in Jingzhou," they replied. "How dare we betray? You need have no doubts, sir. You will soon see the heads of both Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang at your feet."

Cao Cao gave them generous gifts and the following day the two men, with 500 soldiers, set sail with a fair wind for the opposite bank.

Now Zhou Yu was preparing for the attack when their arrival was announced. They said that they were cousins of Cai Mao and had come to surrender themselves to Wu. Zhou Yu called them in and, bowing before the commander, they said in tears, "Our cousin was innocent yet he was put to death by the rebel Cao Cao. To avenge him we have come to offer ourselves to you. Pray let us stay and we will serve in the vanguard force."

Zhou Yu appeared very pleased and rewarded them quite liberally. Then he ordered them to join Gan Ning in leading the van. They thanked him and thought they had fooled the commander.

But Zhou Yu secretly sent for Gan Ning and said to him, "These two have come without their families, so they can't be real deserters but spies sent by our enemy. Now I'm going to turn their trick to my advantage and let them send false information to Cao Cao. I want you to treat them well so they will not suspect, but keep a careful watch over them. On the day we begin our general action against Cao Cao they will be used as sacrifices to the flag. But be very careful that nothing goes wrong." Gan Ning took the order and went away.

Lu Su, totally in the dark to all this, came in to tell Zhou Yu that he thought the two Cais had feigned surrender and should not be accepted.

"But they wish to revenge the death of their cousin," said Zhou Yu. "Where is the pretense? If you are too suspicious no talented men will come to our assistance."

Lu Su left much piqued and went to see Zhuge Liang, to whom he told the story. Zhuge Liang only smiled.

"Why do you smile?" asked Lu Su.

"Because you don't understand Zhou Yu's scheme. Cao Cao and our forces are separated by a big river and spies cannot come and go easily. These two have been sent to feign desertion so that they may act as spies. Zhou Yu is playing the enemy's game against them. He wants them to send false

information. Deceit is not to be despised in war and his scheme is the correct one to employ."

Lu Su finally understood.

That night, as Zhou Yu was sitting in his tent, Huang Gai suddenly came to see him.

"You surely have some wise plan to propose that you come at night like this," said Zhou Yu.

Huang Gai replied, "The enemy is much greater in number than us and it is wrong to delay action. Why not use the tactic of fire?"

"Who suggested that to you?"

"It's my own idea," replied Huang Gai. "Nobody suggested it to me."

"That's exactly what I want to do. And I have kept those two spies because I want them to pass on false information. The pity is that I have no one to feign defection to the other side and work out my plan."

"I will do that," said Huang Gai.

"But if you don't show some physical injuries you won't be believed," said Zhou Yu.

"The Sun family have been very generous to me and I won't resent being crushed to death to repay them," said Huang Gai resolutely.

Zhou Yu bowed to him gratefully and said, “Our country would indeed be fortunate if you wouldn’t object to suffering some bodily injuries to achieve our purpose.”

“I wouldn’t mind even if I had to die,” repeated Huang Gai as he took his leave.

The next day, drums rolled to call all the officers to gather at Zhou Yu’s tent and Zhuge Liang came with the others. Zhou Yu said, “The enemy’s camps extend about three hundred li, so the campaign will be a long one. Each of you is to prepare supplies for three months.”

Scarcely had he finished his words when Huang Gai broke in, “Three months? I think thirty months won’t be of any use. If you can destroy them this month then all is well. If not, then it’s better to take Zhang Chao’s advice—throw down your arms and surrender.”

Zhou Yu flared up and cried, “Our lord’s orders are to destroy Cao Cao and whoever dares to mention the word ‘surrender’ is to be put to death. Now, at the very moment when the two armies are to engage, you dare talk of surrender and dampen the ardor of my men! If I don’t slay you, how can I command the others?”

He ordered the guards to remove Huang Gai and execute him without delay.

Huang Gai then flared up in turn, saying, “Since the days when I fought with General Sun Jian and overran the southeast, I have served the Suns for three generations. Where have you sprung from?”

This made Zhou Yu perfectly furious and Huang Gai was ordered to be instantly executed. Trying to intercede, Gan Ning stepped forward and said, “He is a veteran officer of Wu. Please pardon him.”

“What are you babbling about?” cried Zhou Yu. “Do you dare to come between me and my duty?” Turning to the guards he ordered them to drive him out with cudgels.

The other officers fell on their knees to beg mercy for Huang Gai. “He indeed deserves death, but it would be a loss to the army. We beg you to be lenient and let him live for the time being. You can put him to death after the enemy is defeated.”

But Zhou Yu was implacable. The officers pleaded very hard. At length he seemed to soften a little.

“Had it not been for your intercession he should certainly be put to death. But now I will mitigate the punishment to a beating.”

He turned to the guards and ordered them to give the culprit one hundred blows. Again his colleagues pleaded for remission, but Zhou Yu angrily pushed over the table in front of him, roared to the officers to get out of the way, and urged the guards to get on with their job.

So Huang Gai was stripped, thrown to the ground and caned fifty times. At this point, the officers again entreated that he be let off. Zhou Yu sprang up and, pointing his finger at Huang Gai, said, “That is for your insolence! I will spare you the other fifty for the present. But if you dare flout me again you will be punished for both faults!”

With this he went inside, growling as he went, while the officers helped their beaten colleague to his feet. He was in a pitiable state. His back was cut in many places and bleeding badly. They carried him to his own quarters where he swooned several times. Everyone who came to inquire after him wept in sympathy.

Lu Su also went to see the beaten man and then called on Zhuge Liang in his boat. He said, "In his anger our commander punished Huang Gai very severely today. As we are his subordinates we could not very well plead too hard. But you are a guest and not under his orders. Why did you stand by with folded arms and never say a word?"

"You are trying to fool me," said Zhuge Liang, smiling.

"Why do you say that? I have never deceived you—never since the day we came here together."

"Don't you know that terrible beating was but a trick? How could I try to dissuade him?"

Then Lu Su began to comprehend. Zhuge Liang continued, "Cao Cao would not be taken in unless there were some signs of physical wounds. Now he is going to send Huang Gai over as a deserter and he will see to it that the two spies duly pass on the false information to Cao Cao. But when you see Zhou Yu, you mustn't tell him that I have seen through his scheme. Just say that I'm also blaming him for the beating."

Lu Su went to see Zhou Yu and asked him why he had so cruelly beaten Huang Gai.

“Do the officers resent it?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Most of them are quite upset about it.”

“And what does Zhuge Liang think?”

“He also thinks you are too cold-hearted.”

“Then I have deceived him for once,” said Zhou Yu gleefully.

“What do you mean?” cried Lu Su.

“That beating of Huang Gai is part of my plan. I’m sending him to Cao Cao as a deserter, and so I have provided a reason for his desertion. Then I’m going to use fire against the enemy. In this way we can hope to succeed.”

Lu Su kept silence but he recognized that Zhuge Liang was again right.

Meanwhile, Huang Gai lay in his tent, while all his fellow officers went to inquire after his health. Huang Gai, however, did not say a word but only sighed deeply from time to time.

But when the strategist Kan Ze was announced, Huang Gai told his men to show him into his room. Then he ordered the servants out.

Kan Ze asked, “Are you an enemy of Zhou Yu’s?”

“No,” said Huang Gai.

“Then this beating is just part of a scheme?”

“How do you know?” said Huang Gai.

“Well, from his behavior I guessed about nine tenths of the truth.”

“You see, I have been very generously treated by the Sun family,” said Huang Gai. “As I have no means of showing my gratitude I proposed this scheme to help destroy Cao Cao. Though I suffer I have no regret. Among all those in the army there is not one I can trust but you. I know you are loyal and upright so I dare to tell you the truth.”

“I suppose you want me to go over to Cao Cao and deliver your letter of desertion. Is that it?”

“Just that,” replied Huang Gai. “Will you do it?”

Kan Ze consented joyfully.

The valiant warrior to serve his lord defies pain,

The loyal advisor shares his mind for the state.

Kan Ze’s mission will be told of in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Kan Ze Delivers the Letter of False Defection

Pang Tong Suggests Linking the Ships by Chains

Kan Ze was from Shanyin, son of a humble family. He loved reading but as he was too poor to buy books, so he used to borrow them. He had such a wonderful memory that he could remember everything after reading it just once. He was eloquent and courageous. Later he was employed by Sun Quan as one of his advisors. Since then he and Huang Gai had become very good friends. Knowing that he was eloquent and brave, Huang Gai wanted him to present the letter of false defection to Cao Cao. Kan Ze agreed with enthusiasm, saying, "When you, my friend, have suffered so much for our lord, could I spare myself? A man must make his name in the world or he will rot like grass and trees."

Despite his wounds, Huang Gai slipped off the couch to bow to him in gratitude.

"However, this matter must not wait," continued Kan Ze. "There is no time to lose."

"The letter is already written," said Huang Gai.

Kan Ze took it and left. That very night he disguised himself as a fisherman and left in a small boat for the north shore, under the cold, glittering light of the stars. Soon he drew near the enemy's camp and was captured by the patrol guards. Without delay they informed their lord, who asked, "Is he a spy?"

They replied, "He looks like a fisherman but he says he is an advisor of Wu, named Kan Ze, and he has come on secret business."

"Bring him in," said Cao Cao and Kan Ze was led into his brilliantly lit tent. Cao Cao was seated by a small table, and as soon as he saw the prisoner, he asked, "You are an advisor of Wu. What then are you doing here?"

"People say that you are thirsty for men of ability but from your question I do not think you deserve that reputation," replied Kan Ze. "Oh, Huang Gai, my friend, I'm afraid you've made a mistake."

"I am fighting against Wu and you come here in secret. Certainly I must question you."

"Huang Gai is an old officer of Wu, one who has served three successive rulers. Now he has been cruelly beaten by order of Zhou Yu, for no reason at all, in front of all the other officers. He is hotly angry about this and wishes to desert to your side so that he may have his revenge. He discussed it with me, and as I am as close to him as his own flesh and blood, I have risked my life to come and deliver his secret letter to you. I wonder if you would receive him."

“Where is the letter? asked Cao Cao.

Kan Ze produced the letter and presented it to him. Cao Cao opened it and read it by the candle light:

“I, Huang Gai, have been generously treated by the Sun family and should not really betray my lord. Lately, however, there has been discussions of an attack with our forces of the six districts on your enormous army from the north. As is known to all, we are greatly outnumbered and every officer of Wu, wise or foolish, recognizes that quite well. Only that conceited simpleton, Zhou Yu, maintains that success is possible and rashly desires to smash a stone with an egg. Besides, he is arbitrary and tyrannical, punishing his men for no crime, and leaving meritorious service unrewarded. I am a senior officer and yet have been shamed before all others for no reason. This insult is more than I can bear and I hate him with all my heart.

“I hear that you, sir, are sincere to people and welcome men with ability. So I, with those under my command, desire to enter your service in order to wash away my shame with my achievements. I will bring with me the weapons, supplies, and ships. With tears of blood I state the above and I entreat you not to doubt my sincerity.”

Leaning on the low table by his side, Cao Cao turned this letter over and over and read it again and again. Suddenly he smacked the table, glowered at Kan Ze and cried furiously, “Huang Gai is trying to deceive me by his tale of maltreatment and you have come to deliver a letter of false defection. How dare you play tricks on me?”

He ordered the guards to drag away the messenger and slay him. Kan Ze was at once hustled out but his face betrayed no sign of fear. On the contrary, he laughed aloud. At this Cao Cao told them to bring him back and asked harshly, "What do you find to laugh about now that I have foiled your tricks?"

"I was not laughing at you. I was laughing at Huang Gai's simplicity."

"What do you mean by his simplicity?"

"If you want to slay me, just go ahead. Why so many questions?"

"I have read all the books on the art of war and I can recognize a trick when I see one. This ruse of yours might have fooled others, but not me!"

"Tell me, then, what in the letter sounds like a trick?" asked Kan Ze.

"Let me point out the little slip in the letter so that you will go to your death without bearing a grudge. If he were sincere in his desire to submit, why doesn't the letter name a time? What have you to say to that?"

Kan Ze waited until he had finished and then laughed louder than before. "I am surprised that you are not ashamed of your ignorance but can still boast of your knowledge of the books of war! You had better withdraw before it is too late. If you fight, Zhou Yu will certainly capture you. But how sad to think I should die at the hands of such an ignorant fellow!"

“What do you mean? I, ignorant?”

“You know nothing about strategies and you have no common sense—is that not sufficient?”

“Well, then, tell me where I am going wrong.”

“You do not know how to treat a scholar properly. Why should I tell you? I would rather die.”

“If you can convince me,” said Cao Cao. “I will certainly treat you with respect.”

“Don’t you know the simple truth that when a man is betraying his master he cannot name a time? Suppose the prearranged moment came but he was unable to carry out his plan while you, not knowing, sent your men out to meet him, then the secret would be discovered. He must watch for an opportunity and take it when it comes. How could he possibly know exactly when? But you have no common sense. You accuse me unjustly and want to put a good man like me to death. Indeed, you are an ignorant fellow.”

At this Cao Cao changed his manner, got up, and came over to the prisoner to thank him. “I did not see clearly. I have offended you and I hope you will forget it.”

“Huang Gai and I are both as eager to serve you as a child longs for its parents. Is it possible that we should be false?”

“If you two could render me so great a service, you will certainly be richly rewarded.”

“We do not desire rank or riches—we come because it is the will of Heaven and the plain way of duty.”

Then wine was set out and Kan Ze was treated as an honored guest. While they were drinking, someone came in and whispered something in Cao Cao’s ear. He said, “Let me see the letter.” Then the man gave him a letter, which evidently pleased him.

“That must be from the two spies,” thought Kan Ze, “reporting the punishment of Huang Gai. So Cao Cao is pleased, for he is convinced of the sincerity of our defection.”

Turning toward Kan Ze, Cao Cao said, “I must trouble you to return to fix a date with your friend. As soon as I hear from you I will have an escort waiting.”

“But I have already left. How can I return? Please send some other man you can trust.”

“If I send someone else the secret will be out.”

Kan Ze refused again and again. At last he gave way and said, “If I am to go back I must not stay any longer. I must be off at once.”

Cao Cao offered him gold and silk but he refused to accept. He took his leave, left the camp, and rowed back to the south bank, where he related all that had happened to Huang Gai.

“If it hadn’t been for your persuasive tongue I would have undergone this suffering in vain,” said Huang Gai.

“Let me now go to Gan Ning’s camp to get news of the two Cais,” said Kan Ze.

“Excellent,” said Huang Gai.

He was welcomed into the camp and then he said to his host, “You were treated most disgracefully by Zhou Yu when you tried to save Huang Gai yesterday. I was much distressed.”

Gan Ning smiled but remained silent. Just then, the two Cais came and Kan Ze looked at his host meaningfully. Taking the hint, Gan Ning shouted, “Zhou Yu is so conceited that it seems none of us matters. I will never be able to face my people after his insult!” Then he gritted his teeth and smacked the table in his wrath.

Kan Ze leaned over toward his host and pretended to be saying something in a very low voice, at which Gan Ning bent his head and sighed.

The two Cais, who were Cao Cao’s spies, gathered from this that both Gan Ning and Kan Ze were ripe for desertion and asked provokingly, “Why, sirs, what is troubling you? Why are you so angry?”

“What do you know of the bitterness in our hearts?” said Kan Ze.

“Aren’t you thinking of going over to Cao Cao?” they asked.

At this Kan Ze turned quite pale while Gan Ning started up and drew his sword, crying, “They have found us out. They must die to keep their mouths shut.”

“No, no, please don’t worry,” cried the two, flustered. “Let us tell you our secret.”

“Quick, then,” cried Gan Ning.

So Cai He said, “We have been sent here by the prime minister to pretend to surrender. If you two gentlemen are thinking of defecting we can manage things for you.”

“But are you speaking the truth?” questioned Gan Ning.

“Absolutely true!” cried both at the same moment.

Gan Ning put on a pleased look and said, “Then this is the very Heaven-sent chance.”

“We have already informed the prime minister of how you and General Huang were insulted.”

“I have presented him a letter on behalf of Huang Gai and have come back specially to persuade Gan Ning to join us in desertion,” said Kan Ze.

“When an honest man meets an enlightened master he should serve him with all his heart,” said Gan Ning.

The four then drank together and confided in each other. The two Cai brothers wrote a secret letter to Cao Cao, telling him that Gan Ning had agreed to join in their plot and act as his agent inside the southern army. Kan Ze also wrote secretly to Cao Cao, in which he said that Huang Gai had not found an opportunity so far to go over to his side. However, when he

did come, his ship could be recognized by a green flag at the prow.

When Cao Cao got these two letters he was still doubtful and called together his advisors to discuss the matter. He said, "On the other side Gan Ning has been put to shame by Zhou Yu and wishes to come to me for the sake of revenge. Huang Gai has been punished and sent Kan Ze to propose submission. But I still distrust the whole thing. Who will go over to their camp to find out the real truth?"

Jiang Gan said, "I have been feeling greatly ashamed for my failure last time. I will risk my life again and, this time, I will surely bring good news."

Delighted, Cao Cao told him to start at once. Jiang Gan set out in a small craft and rowed to the southern shore, where he told the guards to inform their commander of his arrival.

Hearing who it was that had come, Zhou Yu said, chuckling, "My success depends upon this man."

Then he told Lu Su to call Pang Tong to come and do certain things for him.

This Pang Tong, also named Pang Shi-yuan, was from Xiangyang. He had come to Wu to get away from the strife there. Lu Su had recommended him to Zhou Yu, but he had not yet presented himself to the commander. However, before they met, Zhou Yu had sent Lu Su to ask him for the best scheme to defeat Cao Cao. Pang Tong had replied: "You must use fire against him. But the river is wide and if one ship is set on fire the others will scatter unless they are chained

together, so that they must remain in one place. That is the only way to succeed."

Lu Su took this message to Zhou Yu who, greatly impressed, said, "The only person who can make this scheme work is Pang Tong himself."

"But Cao Cao is very sly," said Lu Su. "How can Pang Tong go?"

Zhou Yu pondered over this and could not make up his mind. He was just feeling vexed that there should be no means to work this out when suddenly the means presented itself with the arrival of Jiang Gan. He at once sent word to Pang Tong, telling him how to act, and then sat waiting in his tent for his visitor Jiang Gan.

But the visitor became ill at ease and suspicious when he saw that his old student friend Zhou Yu did not come to welcome him, so he took the precaution of sending his boat into a quiet spot to be made fast before he went to the commander's tent.

When Zhou Yu saw him he put on an angry face and said, "My friend, why did you treat me so badly?"

Jiang Gan managed a laugh. "What do you mean?" he said. "I came expressly to pour out my heart to you for the sake of our old friendship."

"You came to persuade me to betray my master, which I would never do unless all the seas dried up and the rocks perished. Last time, for old friendship's sake, I treated you with wine and asked you to stay for the night. But what did

you do to me? You stole my private letter and left without a word of farewell. Then you betrayed me to Cao Cao and caused the death of Cai Mao and Zhang Yun. As a result, my whole plan was upset. What game are you up to this time? Certainly it's not out of kindness to me. If it were not for our old friendship I would never want to see you again. I would like to send you back, but within a day or two I will attack Cao Cao—if I let you stay in my camp, my plans will be leaked."

He ordered his men to take Jiang Gan to the monastery in the Western Hills and let him stay there. Then he said to his visitor, "I'll send you back after I've defeated Cao Cao."

Jiang Gan tried to say something but Zhou Yu turned his back and went into the recesses of his tent. The attendants set the visitor on a horse and led him away to a small monastery at the back of the Western Hills, leaving two soldiers to look after him.

Finding himself in such a lonely place, Jiang Gan was very depressed and had no desire to eat or sleep. That night, the stars were brilliant so he went out of the monastery to take a stroll. Presently, he came to the back of his habitation and heard, nearby, someone crooning over a book. Following the sound with stealthy steps, he came to a tiny cabin by a cliff where a slender beam of light stole out between the rafters. He went nearer, and peeping in, saw a man reading by a lamp near which hung a sword. The book was Sun Tzu's Art of War.

"This is no common person," he thought and so he knocked at the door. It was opened by the reader, a man of uncommon

appearance. Jiang Gan inquired his name and the man replied that he was Pang Tong, also known as Pang Shi-yuan.

"Then you must be Master Phoenix Fledgling," exclaimed Jiang Gan.

"Yes, I am."

"How often have I heard your name!" cried Jiang Gan. "But why are you hidden away in this spot?"

"That Zhou Yu is too conceited to allow anyone else with talent at his side, so I came to live here quietly. But who are you, sir?"

"I am Jiang Gan."

Then Pang Tong invited him inside and the two sat down to talk.

"With your talents you will succeed anywhere," said Jiang Gan. "If you would enter Cao Cao's service I could recommend you to him."

"I have long desired to leave here. If you, sir, will introduce me there is no time like the present. Otherwise, Zhou Yu might get wind of this and he would kill me, I am sure."

So without more ado, they made their way down the hill to the water's edge to seek the boat in which Jiang Gan had come. After they embarked they rowed swiftly to the northern shore. At Cao Cao's camp Jiang Gan went in first to seek his

master, to whom he related how he had discovered his new acquaintance.

When Cao Cao heard that the newcomer was Feng-chu, or Master Phoenix Fledgling, he went out to welcome him in.

After they had taken their seats, Cao Cao said to his guest, "That brat Zhou Yu is so conceited that he looks down on his officers and rejects their advice. Your fame has been long known to me and now that you have been gracious to turn my way, I hope you will not grudge giving us your instruction."

"I, too, know well that you are a marvel of military strategy," said Pang Tong. "I would like to have a look at your forces."

So horses were brought forth and the guest was taken to see the land forces first. They ascended a hill where they could have a panoramic view. After looking all round Pang Tong remarked, "Even if Sun Wu came back to life again, he could not do better, nor could Rang Ju if he reappeared. Everything here accords with the precepts of war. The camp is beside a hill and flanked by a forest. The front and rear are linked to each other and openings are provided for the troops to move forward or backward, advance or retreat."

"I entreat you, sir, not to overpraise me, but to advise me where I can make further improvements," said Cao Cao.

Then they rode down to the naval camp, which comprised twenty-four openings, each drawn up with big battleships on the outside as a rampart, and the lighter craft within. There were also channels for the vessels to pass to and fro. All was in good order.

After surveying all this, Pang Tong said with a smile, “Your method of warfare clearly shows that you certainly live up to your reputation.” Then, pointing toward the southern shore he continued: “Zhou Yu, Zhou Yu, you are doomed to perish!”

Greatly flattered, Cao Cao led his guest back to the tent, where wine was served. While drinking together they discussed military matters and Pang Tong impressed his host with his eloquent remarks and comments, which flowed as freely as water. Cao Cao was full of admiration for his abilities and treated him with the greatest honor.

By and bye the guest seemed to have succumbed to the influence of many cups and said, “Have you any capable medical men in your army?”

“What for?” asked Cao Cao.

“Your marines are likely to contract illnesses and you ought to find some remedy.”

The fact was that at this time Cao Cao’s men had fallen victims of an unfamiliar climate. They were vomiting and a great many of them had even died. It was a source of great anxiety to him. So when Pang Tong suddenly mentioned this, he was eager to ask him for advice.

Pang Tong said, “Your method of training the marine force is excellent, but unfortunately it is not quite perfect.”

Cao Cao pressed him for an answer as to where the imperfection lay.

“I have a plan to overcome the ailment of the men so that no one will be sick and all fit for service.”

“What is it?” asked Cao Cao, delighted.

“The river is wide and the tides ebb and flow. The winds and waves are never at rest. Your men from the north are unused to ships and the motion makes them ill. If your ships, large and small, were grouped in rows of thirty or fifty and chained together, with big boards spread across them, then even horses could move about on them, to say nothing of men. If this were done, there would be no fear of the winds and the waves, nor even of the rising and falling tides.”

Cao Cao left his seat to thank his guest, saying, “I could never defeat the land of Wu without this excellent scheme of yours.”

“That is only my crude and immature idea,” said Pang Tong. “It is up to you to decide.”

All the blacksmiths in the army were summoned that very night to forge iron chains and great bolts to fasten the ships together. And the men rejoiced when they heard of the plan.

In the Battle of Red Cliff,

All agreed to use fire.

By Pang’s advice the ships were chained,

Else Zhou wouldn’t have that battle gained.

Pang Tong said to Cao Cao, “I know many bold men in the south who resent Zhou Yu. Let me use my power of speech to persuade them to come over to you. Then Zhou Yu will be isolated, with no help from his fellow officers, and you can certainly take him captive. Once he is overcome, Liu Bei will be of no account.”

“If you can render me so great a service I will certainly present a memorial to the Emperor and obtain for you one of the highest offices,” said Cao Cao.

“I am not doing this for the sake of rank or riches, but from a desire to save the people. If you cross the river I entreat you to be merciful.”

“I am acting on Heaven’s behalf to do right. I will not slay the people.”

Pang Tong thanked him and then begged for a document that would protect his own family.

“Where do they live?” asked Cao Cao.

“Right by the riverbank. They will be safe if you can give me this document.”

Cao Cao ordered a decree to be prepared. Having signed it he gave it to Pang Tong, who bowed to him in gratitude.

“You should attack as soon as I am gone,” said Pang Tong. “Do not wait until Zhou Yu finds out.”

Cao Cao agreed and the strategist took his leave.

Soon, he came to the river. As he was about to embark he was seized from behind by a man in a Taoist robe and a bamboo hat, who said, “You do have guts, don’t you? Huang Gai plays the trick of having himself tortured and Kan Ze has presented the letter of false submission. Now you have come to offer the fatal scheme of chaining the ships together lest the flames may not completely destroy them. This sort of wicked scheme may have been enough to blind Cao Cao, but not me!”

Pang Tong was so frightened that his three souls seem to have flown away and his seven spirits scattered.

By clever strategies the south may succeed,

But who says there aren’t able men in the north?

Who the speaker was will be revealed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Cao Cao Feasts on the Yangtze and Composes a Song

The Northern Men Attack the South Using Chained Ships

At the end of the last chapter Pang Tong was filled with fear when someone seized him and told him that he had seen through all the tricks of the south. Hastily turning around to find out who the speaker was, he saw, to his great relief, that it was his old friend Xu Shu. Looking around to make sure there was no one near, he said, "It would be a pity if you upset my plan. The fate of the people of all the eighty-one counties in the south is in your hands."

Xu Shu smiled. "And what of the fate of these 830,000 northern men here?" he challenged.

"Do you really intend to wreck my scheme?"

"I've never forgotten the kindness of Liu Bei, nor my oath to avenge the death of my mother on Cao Cao. I've pledged never to plan anything for him. Am I likely to wreck yours now? But I'm here with the army and after its defeat, everyone, good or bad, will suffer alike. How can I escape? Tell me how I can secure safety and I'll seal my lips and go away."

Pang Tong smiled, “That shouldn’t be a problem for a man of your genius.”

“Please instruct me what to do.”

So Pang Tong whispered something in his ear, which seemed to please Xu Shu greatly, for he thanked him most cordially. Then Pang Tong took his leave and went back to the southern shore in his boat.

That night, Xu Shu sent his men to spread certain rumors in the various camps. The next day, men in small groups were seen everywhere, whispering to each other till the camps were abuzz. Some of the men went to Cao Cao and told him that a rumor was going around that Han Sui and Ma Teng were going to attack the capital. This troubled Cao Cao, who called his advisors to a council. He said, “The only anxiety I have about this expedition is what mischief Han Sui and Ma Teng might be up to. Now there is a rumor running among the men, and though this may not be true, it is necessary to be on our guard.”

At this point Xu Shu said, “You have been kind enough to give me a post, sir, and I have really done nothing in return. Give me 3,000 men and I will leave at once to guard San Pass. If any pressing matter occurs I will report to you at once.”

“If you can go I will have no worries. There are already some troops at the pass, who will be under your command, and now I will give you 3,000 more cavalry and foot soldiers. Let Zhang Ba be the leader of the van. You must set out at once.”

Xu Shu took his leave and left, in company with Zhang Ba. This was the very scheme that Pang Tong had told his friend to secure his safety.

Cao Cao marched south, but at his back

There was the fear of rear attack.

Pang Tong's good counsel Xu Shu took,
And thus the fish escaped the hook.

Cao Cao's anxiety diminished after he had sent away Xu Shu. Then he mounted and went down to inspect his troops—first the land forces and then the naval. He boarded a large ship on whose tall mast fluttered the standard bearing the large character for commander. The naval camps were arranged on the two sides and on the ships were deployed a thousand bows and crossbows.

It was the full moon of the eleventh month of the thirteenth year of Jian An. The sky was clear. There was no wind and the river lay calm. Cao Cao ordered his men to prepare a great banquet with music and he invited all his advisors and officers. As evening drew on the moon rose over the eastern hills in its immaculate splendor and beneath it lay the broad belt of the river, like a band of pure white silk. It was a great assembly—all the guests were clad in gorgeous silks and embroidered robes and the weapons of the fighting men glittered in the moonlight. The officials, civil and military, were seated in order of precedence.

The setting, too, was exquisite. The Nanping hills were outlined as in a picture. In the east lay the boundaries of

Caisang; in the west the river stretched as far as Xiakou; in the south lay the Hills of Fan; while in the north was the Forest of Wulin. There was wide open space on every side.

Thrilled by the enchanting scenery, Cao Cao addressed the assembly: “My one aim since I enlisted my first band of volunteers has been the removal of evil from the state and I have sworn to cleanse the country and restore tranquillity. Now there is only this land of Wu that I have not conquered. But, with my army of one million men and the great effort of you gentlemen, I have no doubt of my final success. After I have subdued Wu there will be no trouble in all the country. Then we will live in peace, enjoying wealth and honor together.”

They rose in a body to express their appreciation. “May Your Lordship soon win complete victory, and for all our lives we will repose in the shade of your good fortune.”

In his elation Cao Cao told the servants to serve the wine and the guests drank till late. Mellow with drink, he pointed to the south bank and said, “Zhou Yu and Lu Su, you know nothing about the will of Heaven. Now you have the misfortune of the desertion of your own officers. Heaven is indeed on my side.”

“Say nothing about these,” warned Xun You, “lest they become known to the enemy.”

But Cao Cao only laughed. “All of you present here are my trusted men, officers, or attendants. There is nothing to fear.”

Pointing to Xiakou he continued, “Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, how foolish of you to attempt to shake Mount Tai with your puny force of ants!”

Then turning to his followers, he said, “I am now fifty-four. If I gain Wu, I have one special wish. In the past, Lord Qiao and I were great friends and I know his two daughters are lovely beyond words. I wasn’t aware that they were later married to Sun Ce and Zhou Yu. But now I have built the Bronze Bird Tower on the Zhang River and if I conquer the south I will get the two fair ladies and keep them in the tower to comfort my declining years. My desires will then be complete.”

He laughed heartily at the prospect.

Du Mu, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, once wrote,

> A broken halberd buried in the sand,
>
> With deep rust eaten,
> Loud tells of ancient battles on the strand,
> When Cao was beaten.
>
> Had eastern winds Zhou’s plan refused to aid
> And fan the flame,
> Two captives fair, locked in the Bronze Bird’s shade,
> Would’ve gone to shame.

But suddenly amid the merriment was heard the hoarse cry of a raven flying toward the south.

“Why does that raven cry like this in the night?” asked Cao Cao.

“The moon is so bright that he thinks it is day,” they said, “and so he cries and leaves his tree.”

Cao Cao burst into more hearty laughter. By this time he was quite intoxicated. He set up his spear in the prow of the ship and poured a libation into the river and then drank three brimming goblets. Holding the spear, he said, “With this spear I have broken up the Yellow Turbans, captured Lu Bu, destroyed Yuan Shu, subdued Yuan Shao, penetrated into the far north, and reached Liaodong. I have fought throughout the empire as a true hero does. This scene before me moves me to the depths and I will sing a song. I want you all to accompany me.”

And so he sang:

> Songs are to go with wine,
>
> For brief indeed is life.
>
> Like the dew drops at dawn
> How time has passed beyond recall!
>
> Man’s life may be spent in the noblest enterprise,
> But sorrowful thoughts in his heart oft arise.
>
> Let us wash away our lament that intrude,
> With bumpers of wine such as Du Kang once brewed.

Gone are my days of youthful fire
And still ungained is my desire.

I wait and ponder till now
For my thoughts are to you bound.

The deer feed on the level plain
And joyful call, then feed again.

My noble guests are gathered round,
The air is trilled with joyful sound.

Splendid is the moonlight
That forever is bright.

Sadness rises in my heart
Never will it cease to hurt.

Crossing fields and paths,
Friends come to greet me.

Merrily we talk and feast,
Our hearts warm with friendships past.

The stars are paled by the full moon's light,
The raven wings his southward flight,
And thrice he circles round a tree,
No place thereon to rest finds he.

The mountains can never be too high,

Nor can the waters be too deep.

Duke Zhou welcomed the valiant and the wise,
And men gathered around him from all sides.

When he had finished they sang it with him and were all exceedingly merry. However, one guest suddenly said, "When the great army is on the point of battle and officers and men are about to risk their lives, why do you, sir, speak such words of ill fortune?"

Cao Cao turned quickly toward the speaker, who was Liu Fu, Governor of Yangzhou. This Liu started his career from Hefei. When first appointed to his post, he had quelled the runaway people and restored order. He had founded schools and encouraged the people to farm the land. In his many years of employment with Cao Cao he had rendered valuable services.

Holding his spear crosswise Cao Cao asked, "What ill-omened words have I used?"

"You spoke of the moon diming the stars and the raven flying southward without finding a resting place after circling round the trees for three times. These are ill-omened words."

"How dare you blight my joy?" cried Cao Cao in wrath. With that he raised his spear and slew Liu Fu.

The assembly broke up and the guests dispersed in fear and confusion. The next day, when he had recovered from his drunkeness, Cao Cao grieved at what he had done. When the victim's son came to beg for the body of his father for burial, Cao Cao wept and expressed his sorrow.

“I killed your father by mistake, for I was drunk yesterday. I am exceedingly sorry for that. Your father shall be interred with the honors of a minister of the highest rank.”

He sent a band of soldiers to escort the body home for burial without delay.

On the following day the two leaders of the naval force came to report that the ships, large or small, had been connected together by chains and all the other war preparations were complete. They told him that the navy was ready to receive his orders to begin the attack.

Therefore Cao Cao took his seat on board a large ship in the center of the naval camp, while all the officers of both land and naval forces assembled on his two sides to receive orders. The various armies and squadrons under the command of ten veteran officers were distinguished by flags of five different colors: the central naval squadron, yellow; the leading squadron, red; the rear squadron, black; the left, blue; and the right, white. For the horse soldiers on shore the vanguard had a red flag; for the rearguard, black; and blue and white for the two wings respectively. Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong were in charge of reserve forces and Xu Chu and Zhang Liao were responsible for directing troop movements and general inspection. The other officers were also given command of various units.

All being ready, there sounded three rolls of drums and the ships sailed out of the twenty-four gates under a strong northwest wind. When they got among the surging waves they were found to be as steady as on dry land. The northern men on the ships displayed their bravery by flourishing their

swords and spears. The different squadrons with their distinctive flags kept to their places in the front or rear, right or left, while fifty light craft sailed to and fro keeping order and directing progress.

Cao Cao, watching the maneuvers of his navy from the commander's platform, rejoiced greatly at heart, thinking that this surely meant the way to victory. He recalled the ships and the squadrons returned in perfect order to their base.

Back in his tent, Cao Cao said to his advisors, "If Heaven had not been on my side, how could I have got this excellent plan from Pang Tong? Now that the ships are attached firmly to each other, we can cross the river as easily as walking on level land."

"This is quite true," said Cheng Yu, "but what if the enemy should use fire? It will be impossible for the ships to scatter to avoid it. We must guard against this danger."

Cao Cao laughed. "You look a long way ahead," he said, "but there is something you have missed."

"He is right," said Xun Yu. "Why do you laugh at him?"

"The use of fire in an attack depends upon the wind. Here we are in the middle of winter and only west and north winds blow. How can there be winds from the east or south? We are to the northwest, whereas our enemy is on the south bank. If they use fire they will destroy themselves. We have nothing to fear. If it were the tenth moon when the weather may be as warm as spring, I would have long taken precautions."

“Your superior foresight has no match,” said the others in chorus, now fully convinced.

“With northern men unused to ships I could never have crossed the river but for this plan,” said Cao Cao.

At this, two minor officers stepped forward and cried, “We are from the north, but we are also sailors. Give us twenty boats and we will sail across and seize some of the enemy’s flags and drums for you, so that we may prove ourselves adepts on the water as well.”

The speakers were two men who had formerly served under Yuan Shao, named Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan.

“I do not think this would suit you two, born and brought up in the north,” said Cao Cao. “The southern men are thoroughly accustomed to ships. This is no child’s game and you should not risk your lives.”

Still they persisted. “If we fail, we are willing to be punished according to army laws.”

“The fighting ships are all chained together,” said Cao Cao. “There are only small twenty-man boats left. They are unsuitable for fighting.”

Jiao Chu said, “If we took large ships, would there be anything remarkable? We beg you to give us a score of the small boats—we will go straight to the enemy’s camp today, seize a flag, slay an officer, and return.”

Cao Cao was persuaded and said, “I will let you have twenty boats and 500 good, valiant men armed with long spears and strong crossbows. Early tomorrow I will order the main fleet to make a demonstration on the river and I will also tell Wen Ping to support you on your withdrawal with thirty ships.”

The two men went off, greatly elated. The next morning, the troops had an early meal and at the fifth watch all was ready for the action. Then from the naval camp drums rolled and gongs clanged as the ships moved out and took up their positions on the water, their flags fluttering in the morning wind, displaying alternating colors of red and green. And the two intrepid leaders with their squadron of small boats went down the lines and out into the stream toward the southern shore.

Now the sound of drums at Cao Cao’s camp the previous day had been heard on the southern bank and scouts had seen his fleet maneuvering in the open river. Zhou Yu, who was immediately informed about this, went to the top of a hill to watch but the fleet had already withdrawn. So when the sound of drums was again heard, scouts hastened to climb up and watch. They saw coming toward them a squadron of small boats bounding over the waves. In great haste, they reported this to Zhou Yu, who called for volunteers to repel them. Han Dang and Zhou Tai offered themselves. Zhou Yu was pleased. Then he ordered his officers to guard their camps closely and not to go rashly into action.

Han Dang and Zhou Tai sailed out from right and left, each with five scout boats.

Meanwhile, the two braggarts from the north, driven by a desire to seem brave, came down swiftly under the powerful strokes of the oars. As they neared, Han Dang, wearing armor to protect his heart, stood in the prow of his boat, gripping a spear. Jiao Chu, who was ahead of his friend, ordered his men to shoot at Han Dang, who fended off the arrows with his shield. Jiao Chu twirled his long spear as he engaged his opponent. But, at the first thrust, he was killed.

His friend Zhang Nan was coming up with great shouts when Zhou Tai arrived from the side and intercepted him and these two squadrons began shooting arrows at each other in clouds. When his boat was still some seven or eight feet away from his opponent's, Zhou Tai, with his shield in one hand and his sword in the other, leaped across and cut down Zhang Nan, who fell into the water. Then he started killing the soldiers on the boat. All the other northern boats rowed hard to get away. The southerners pursued but soon came in sight of Wen Ping's supporting squadron. Once more fighting broke out between the opposing forces.

Zhou Yu stood on a hill with his officers and looked over to the other shore where the northern vessels ranged, their flags and ensigns in perfect order. Then he looked back at Han Dang and Zhou Tai engaged in battle with Wen Ping. It soon became evident that the latter was no match for his own officers. Wen Ping turned about to flee, and Zhou Tai and Han Dang pursued. Zhou Yu, fearing lest they should go too far into the enemy's area, hoisted a white flag and sounded the gongs of recall. The northern vessels also returned to their camps.

To his officers Zhou Yu said, “The masts of the northern ships stand thick as reeds and Cao Cao himself is full of wiles. What is the best plan to destroy him?”

Before anyone could reply, something happened that grabbed their attention. The pole of the great yellow flag in the center of Cao Cao’s fleet suddenly snapped in the wind, sending the flag right into the river.

Zhou Yu laughed. “That’s a bad omen for them,” he said.

Just then, a violent blast of wind swept up and the high waves beat upon the shore. A corner of his own flag brushed Zhou Yu on the cheek and suddenly a thought flashed through his mind. He uttered a loud cry and fell backward, while blood oozed out of his mouth. The others hastened to pick him up but he had already lost consciousness.

At one time he laughed, at another he cried,

To ensure a triumph over the north is quite hard.

Whether Zhou Yu would live or die will be revealed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

On the Altar of Seven Stars Zhuge Liang Prays for an Easterly Wind

At the Junction of Three Rivers Zhou Yu Sets Fire to Cao Cao's Fleet

At the end of the last chapter Zhou Yu was seized by a sudden illness as he was watching the fleet of his enemy. He was carried into his tent and all his officers came to inquire after him. They said to each other in dismay, "What a disaster that our commander should be taken ill when Cao Cao with his million men threatens to devour us! What if he should attack now?"

Messengers were at once sent to report the sad news to Sun Quan while physicians did their best for the invalid. Lu Su was particularly worried at the illness of his friend and went to see Zhuge Liang to tell him about it.

"What do you make of it?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"Good fortune for Cao Cao—bad for us," answered Lu Su.

"I can cure him," said Zhuge Liang with a smile.

"If you can, it will be very fortunate for the state," said Lu Su.

He asked Zhuge Liang to go and see the sick man with him. So they went and Lu Su entered first. Zhou Yu lay in bed, his head covered by a quilt.

“How are you feeling?” asked Lu Su.

“There is a pain in my heart and every now and again I feel faint and dizzy.”

“Have you taken any medicine?”

“I feel sick every time I try to swallow it.”

“I saw Zhuge Liang just now and he said he could heal you. He is outside. Shall I call him in to treat you?”

Zhou Yu asked him to invite Zhuge Liang inside and then he told his servants to help him to a sitting position.

Presently, Zhuge Liang entered. “I have not seen you for several days,” he said. “How come you are unwell?”

“Man is subject to unexpected fortune or misfortune,” replied Zhou Yu. “Can anyone be secure?”

“And Heaven may produce sudden winds or clouds, too,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling. “Can anyone predict?”

Zhou Yu turned pale and a low groan escaped him, while his visitor went on, “Do you feel vexed, as though troubles were piling up in your heart?”

“Yes,” said Zhou Yu.

“You need cooling medicine to ease this sense of vexation.”

“I have taken a cooling draught, but it has done me no good.”

“You must get your qi* into good order to regulate your breathing before the draught will have any effect.”

Zhou Yu thought that Zhuge Liang knew what was really the matter with him so he asked meaningfully, “What medicine should I take for that?”

“I know one means of regulating your qi,” replied Zhuge Liang, smiling.

“I hope you will tell me.”

Zhuge Liang called for paper and pen, sent away the servants and then wrote down the following words: “To overcome Cao Cao, fire is the best plan. Now all is ready, but there is no east wind.”

He gave this to the sick man, saying, “This is the cause of your illness.”

Zhou Yu was astonished to read the words and he thought, “This Zhuge Liang is really more than human. He has long been aware of what is on my mind and my best course is to tell him the truth.”

So he said with a smile, “Since you know the cause of my illness, what do you recommend as treatment? The need of a remedy is very urgent.”

“Although I have no great talent,” said Zhuge Liang, “I have had the fortune of meeting an unusual man from whom I have received certain books of magic. I can call the winds and summon the rains. Since you need a southeasterly wind, you must build an altar, the Altar of Seven Stars, on the Nanping Mountains. It must be nine feet high, with three tiers, surrounded by 120 men bearing flags. On this altar I will work the magic to procure a strong southeasterly wind for three days and three nights. Do you think that is enough?”

“One night of strong wind will serve my purpose,” said Zhou Yu, “not to say three whole days and nights. But the matter is pressing and there must be no delay.”

“I will get the wind to blow from the twentieth day to the twenty-second day of this month. Will that suit you?”

Zhou Yu was delighted and he rose from his couch, fully cured of his illness. He gave orders for 500 men to be sent to the Nanping Mountains to build the altar and 120 others to stand on guard at the altar, bearing flags, and await further commands from Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang took his leave and rode off with Lu Su to the mountains, where he chose a proper site for the altar. He told the soldiers to build the altar with red earth from the southeast of the mountains. It was 240 feet in circumference and nine feet in height, with three tiers, each being three feet high. On the lowest tier he placed the flags symbolizing the twenty-eight constellations of stars in the sky; on the east were seven green flags arranged in the shape of a green dragon; on the north, seven black flags in the shape of a black turtle; on the west, seven white flags in the shape of a white

tiger; and on the south, seven red flags in the shape of a red sparrow. Around the second tier he placed sixty-four yellow flags in groups of eight, corresponding to the sixty-four trigrams.

On the top tier were placed four men, each wearing a Taoist headdress and a black silk robe embroidered with a phoenix and held by a wide sash. They wore red boots and square-cut skirts. One of them stood to the front left, holding a long pole bearing at its tip a plume of rooster feathers, to show from their least movements signs of a wind blowing. Another stood on the front right, also holding a long pole, bearing a belt with the symbol of the seven stars, to show the direction of the wind. On the rear left stood the third man with a sword, and on the rear right the fourth man with an incense-burner. Surrounding the altar at its base were twenty-four men holding flags, umbrellas, halberds, lances, yellow hatchets, white banners with yak tails, red bannerols, and black ensigns.

On the appointed day Zhuge Liang, having chosen a propitious moment, bathed and fasted to purify himself. Then he approached the altar in a Taoist robe, barefoot and with loosened hair.

He said to Lu Su, “Please return to the camp and assist your commander in deploying his forces. If my efforts fail, don’t blame me.”

So Lu Su left him. Then he said to the guards, “You are not to leave your posts without permission, or to whisper to each other, or to call out, or to show any sign of alarm. Death will be the penalty for disobedience.” All promised to obey.

Then he slowly ascended the altar and, after choosing the most suitable position, lighted the incense and sprinkled water in a basin. This done, he gazed into the heavens and prayed silently. After some time he descended and returned to his tent for a brief rest.

Thrice that day he ascended the altar and thrice descended, but there was no sign of the wind.

At the same time, Zhou Yu with Cheng Pu and Lu Su and a certain number of military officers were waiting in the tent for the wished-for wind to blow so that the attack could be launched. News of this was also sent to Sun Quan to request reinforcements.

Huang Gai, too, had his score of fire ships ready. Thickly studded with large nails in their prows, these ships were loaded on the bottom with dry reeds and firewood soaked in fish oil and on the top with sulfur, saltpeter, and other inflammables, all of which were covered by oil cloth. In the prow of each was a green dragon flag and at the stern was fastened a light boat. All awaited orders to move into action.

Meanwhile, Gan Ning and Kan Ze were keeping Cao Cao's two spies, the Cai brothers, in their camp, entertaining them with wine all day. They issued strict orders not to allow a single man to get on shore. The whole camp was so closely guarded by the men of Wu that not a drop of water could have trickled through. They were also waiting for the order to start the campaign.

While Zhou Yu was anxiously awaiting the desired wind, a messenger came to report that Sun Quan and his fleet had

anchored at a place eighty-five li from the camp, where he was waiting for further news. Zhou Yu sent Lu Su to inform all the officers and men to ready their ships, weapons, sails, and oars for immediate use, and to impress upon them the severe penalties of being caught unprepared. All observed the order with alacrity and were waiting eagerly for the fight.

But the sky remained obstinately clear and as night drew near not a single breath of air stirred.

"We have been cheated," said Zhou Yu. "Indeed, what possibility is there of a southeast wind in mid-winter?"

"I don't think Zhuge Liang will deceive us," said Lu Su.

Around the third watch the sound of movement arose in the air. Soon the flags fluttered. Zhou Yu went out of his tent to look and saw the tassels of the flags were actually turning toward the northwest. Instantly, a southeast wind was in full force.

Zhou Yu was, however, greatly frightened at the power of Zhuge Liang, whose help he had invoked. "Why, that man really knows how to alter the course of nature!" he thought to himself. "His power is incalculable, beyond the ken of gods or spirits. He can't be allowed to live to be a danger to the land of Wu. I must slay him as soon as possible to avoid later troubles."

Without delay he called two officers in the guards unit, Ding Feng and Xu Sheng, and ordered each of them to take a hundred men and rush to the Altar of Seven Stars at the Nanping Mountains, one by boat, the other by land. As soon

as they got there, without asking questions or giving reasons, they were to seize and behead Zhuge Liang and return to claim their reward with his head.

The two went off on their murderous errand against a southeast wind, one leading a hundred swordsmen going as fast as oars could propel the boat on the river, the other at the head of a hundred archers and bowmen, riding as quickly as their horses could gallop by road.

> Sleeping Dragon ascended the Seven Stars' Altar,
>
> Overnight a southeasterly wind blew and waves lapped.
> Had he not exercised his mighty magic,
> Could Zhou Yu have demonstrated his skill?

Ding Feng with his horsemen arrived first. He saw the guards standing in the wind with their flags. Dismounting, he went to the top of the altar, sword in hand, but to his surprise Zhuge Liang was not there. He hastened to question the guards and they told him the strategist had just gone down. Ding Feng ran down the hill to search. By that time Xu Sheng had also arrived by boat and the two met on the bank.

Presently the soldiers told them, "Yesterday evening a small, fast boat anchored near here. Just now we saw Zhuge Liang, with his hair loose, get on board and then the boat sailed upstream."

So they went in pursuit, one by water and the other by land. Xu Sheng ordered his men to put out all sail and take every advantage of the wind. Before long he spotted Zhuge Liang's

boat ahead. When it was near enough, he stood in the prow of his own boat and shouted, “Don’t go away, master! Our commander wishes to see you.”

Zhuge Liang, who was standing in the stern of his boat, just laughed aloud, “Go and tell your commander to make good use of his men. Tell him I am going back to Xiakou for the present and hope to see him again another day.”

“Please wait a little while,” cried Xu Sheng. “He has something most important to tell you.”

“I knew he would not let me live and would surely send someone to kill me. That is why I told Zhao Yun beforehand to come and meet me here. You had better not pursue.”

Seeing that the other ship had no sail, Xu Sheng thought he could assuredly catch up with it, so he pressed on with the pursuit. But when he got very close Zhao Yun fitted an arrow to his bow and, standing in the stern of his boat, cried, “I am Zhao Zi-long of Changshan and I have come expressly to escort our chief advisor back. Why are you pursuing him? I would like to shoot you to death, only that would damage the friendly relations between our two sides. I will let you know my skill, though.”

With that he fired, and the arrow whizzed through the air, cutting through the rope that held up the sail. Down came the sail, trailing in the water and the boat swung around. Then Zhao Yun’s boat hoisted its sail and the fair wind speedily carried it out of sight.

From the bank Ding Feng called his comrade to come near the shore. “Zhuge Liang is too clever for any man and Zhao Yun is the bravest of the brave. You remember what he did at the Long Slope. All we can do is to return and report.”

So they returned to camp and told Zhou Yu about what had happened. Zhou Yu was indeed startled at the depth of his rival’s resourcefulness. “I’ll have no peace day or night while he lives,” he said.

“Let’s deal with him after Cao Cao is defeated,” said Lu Su.

Zhou Yu consented.

At last the moment for action came. All the officers were summoned to the commander’s tent to receive orders. Zhou Yu first said to Gan Ning: “Take Cai Zhong and his men with you and go along the south bank to Wulin, where Cao Cao stores his grain. Fly the flags of the northern army to avoid detection. Then penetrate deep into the enemy’s lines and light a torch as a signal. Leave Cai He here. I have other uses for him.”

Next he said to Taishi Ci, “Take 3,000 men and leave as quickly as possible for Huangzhou to cut off Cao Cao from his forces in Hefei. When you get near the enemy, light a torch as a signal. Look out for a red flag, for that means the arrival of reinforcements from our lord Sun Quan.”

These two had the farthest to go and started first. Then he ordered four more divisions, each of 3,000 men, to different tasks.

The third division led by Lu Meng was to go to Wulin to support Gan Ning and to set fire to Cao Cao's camps. A fourth division was to cross the borders of Yiling and support his fellow officers as soon as the signal of fire from Wulin was seen. A fifth division was to go and seize Hanyang and then fall on the enemy along the river. They were to be supported by the sixth division carrying white banners.

When these six land forces had set out, Zhou Yu gave orders to his marine forces. Huang Gai was to get ready his fire ships and dispatch a letter to Cao Cao, telling him that he was going over to his side that evening. He was to be supported by four squadrons, each consisting of 300 boats. The four squadrons were placed under four commanders—Han Dang, Zhou Tai, Jiang Qin, and Chen Wu. Each squadron was preceded by twenty fire boats.

Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu went on board a large ship to direct the battle, with Ding Feng and Xu Sheng as their guards. Lu Su, Kan Ze and the advisors were the only ones left to look after the camp. Cheng Pu was greatly impressed by Zhou Yu's efficiency in the deployment of the troops.

Just then Sun Quan's messenger came bearing the news that he had made Lu Xun leader of the van, and ordered him to advance toward Qizhou and Huangzhou. He himself would lead the reserve force.

Zhou Yu then sent his men to the Western Hills to explode fire bombs and to hoist flags on the Nanping Mountains.

So all being ready they waited for dusk when the battle would begin.

Here it is necessary to return to Liu Bei. At this moment he was at Xiakou, anxiously awaiting the return of his advisor. Then he saw a fleet of ships led by Liu Qi, who had come to find out how things were progressing. When the young man had joined him, Liu Bei said, “The southeast wind has been blowing for some time, yet Zi-long still has not returned with Kongming. I am really worried.”

Soon, however, a soldier pointed toward the port of Fankou and said, “A single sail is coming up before the wind. It must be the advisor.” So Liu Bei and Liu Qi went down to meet the boat. Soon the vessel reached the shore and Zhuge Liang and Zhao Yun disembarked. Liu Bei was very happy to see them back.

When they had inquired after each other’s wellbeing, Zhuge Liang said, “There is no time for other things now. Are the troops and ships ready?”

“Yes, they have long been ready,” replied Liu Bei. “Only waiting for your orders.”

The three then went to the tent and took their seats. Zhuge Liang at once began to issue orders. He called Zhao Yun and said to him, “Zi-long, I want you to take 3,000 men and cross the river to Wulin by the footpath. Choose a dense undergrowth and prepare an ambush. Tonight, after the fourth watch, Cao Cao will surely hurry along that way. Wait until half his men have passed, then raise a fire. Cao Cao may not be wholly destroyed but many of his men will perish.”

“There are two roads in Wulin,” said Zhao Yun. “One leads to Nanjun and the other to Jingzhou. Which way is he coming from?”

“The road to Nanjun is too dangerous and Cao Cao will not dare to take that road. He’s certainly coming along the Jingzhou road and from there escape to the capital.”

Then Zhao Yun departed. Next Zhuge Liang said to Zhang Fei, “Yi-de, you also take 3,000 men and cross the river to cut the road to Yiling. Lay an ambush in the Gourd Valley. As he dares not go to South Yiling, Cao Cao will surely head for North Yiling. Tomorrow, after the rain, he will halt there to cook a meal. As soon as the smoke is seen to rise from their cooking fires you will set the hillside ablaze. You will not capture Cao Cao but you will render an excellent service.”

So Zhang Fei left. Next he called forth Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and Liu Feng. They were to take the command of three squadrons and deal a further blow to the defeated enemy on the river and to capture their weapons.

The three left. Then Zhuge Liang said to Liu Qi, “Wuchang is a place of strategic importance. Please return to your own city and station your troops on the bank. Some of Cao Cao’s defeated men will flee there and you can capture them. But you are not to leave the city without the best of reasons.”

And Liu Qi, too, took his leave.

Then Zhuge Liang said to Liu Bei, “You, my lord, can station your troops in Fankou and sit calmly and watch how Zhou Yu wins this great battle tonight.”

All this time Guan Yu had been silently waiting his turn but Zhuge Liang paid no notice of him. In the end he could bear this no longer and he cried, “Since I first followed my brother many years ago I have never been left behind. Now that a great battle is being fought, I’m completely left out. What does this mean?”

“Don’t be angry,” laughed Zhuge Liang. “I meant to ask you to guard a most important point but I have some apprehensions about sending you there.”

“What could they be?” asked Guan Yu. “I hope you will explain.”

“You see, Cao Cao was once very kind to you and you cannot help feeling grateful. After his defeat, he will certainly flee via the road to Huarong. If I were to send you to guard it you would let him escape. So I can’t send you.”

“You are most suspicious, sir,” replied Guan Yu. “It’s true he once treated me well, yet I have repaid him by slaying two of his most dangerous opponents, besides raising a siege. If he happened to come my way this time I certainly wouldn’t let him go.”

“But what if you do?”

“You can punish me by military law.”

“Then put that down in writing.”

So Guan Yu signed a written pledge and gave it to Zhuge Liang.

“But what if Cao Cao doesn’t come that way?” asked Guan Yu.

“I will give you a written pledge that he will,” said Zhuge Liang.

Guan Yu was much pleased.

Then Zhuge Liang continued, “On the hills by the road to Huarong you are to raise a fire with a heap of wood and grass and let the smoke lure Cao Cao into coming.”

“If Cao Cao sees the smoke he will suspect an ambush and will not come,” said Guan Yu.

Zhuge Liang said, smiling, “Don’t you know in a war falsehood may be truth and vice versa? Cao Cao is an able strategist but you can deceive him this time. When he sees the smoke he will take it as a camouflage and risk going that way. But don’t let your kindness of heart rule your conduct.”

Thus Guan Yu left, taking with him his adopted son Guan Ping, Zhou Cang, and 500 swordsman.

Liu Bei said, “My brother has a very high sense of honor. If Cao Cao should really go that way I am afraid he will let him pass.”

“I have consulted the stars and I know Cao Cao is not fated to come to his end yet,” said Zhuge Liang. “It will be good to let Yun-chang perform this kind act.”

“Indeed, no one in the country can be so far-sighted as you are,” said Liu Bei.

The two then went to Fankou, where they could watch Zhou Yu direct the battle. Sun Qian and Jian Yong remained to guard the city.

Cao Cao was in his great camp in conference with his advisors and awaiting news from Huang Gai. The southeast wind was very strong that day and Cheng Yu again asked his master to take precautions. But Cao Cao only laughed, saying, “This is the time of Winter Solstice when a new cycle in the weather pattern begins. In such moments of change there is bound to be an occasional southeast wind. I see nothing to be alarmed about.”

Just then soldiers came to report the arrival of a small boat from the southern shore with a letter from Huang Gai. The messenger was brought in and the letter presented. It said, “Zhou Yu has kept such a strict watch that there has been no chance for me to escape. But now some grain is coming down from Lake Poyang and I have been appointed leader of the convoy, which will give me the opportunity I desire. I will slay some of their best officers and bring their heads as an offering when I come. At about the second watch tonight look for ships with green dragon flags. These will be my grain ships.”

This letter delighted Cao Cao who, with his officers, went to the naval camp and boarded a great ship to watch for the arrival of Huang Gai.

On the southern shore, when evening fell, Zhou Yu sent for Cai He and told soldiers to bind him. The man protested that he had committed no crime but Zhou Yu said, “What sort of a fellow are you that you dare to come and pretend to desert to my side? I need a sacrifice for my flag and your head will serve my purpose.”

Cai He, unable to deny the charge, cried, “Two of your own men, Kan Ze and Gan Ning, are also in the plot!”

“Under my orders,” said Zhou Yu.

It was too late for Cai He to show remorse and he was taken to the riverbank, where the black standard had been set up. After the pouring of a libation and the burning of paper, he was beheaded, his blood being offered as a sacrifice to the flag.

After this ceremony the ships set out and Huang Gai took his place on the third fire ship. He wore breast armor and carried a keen blade. On his flag were written four large characters: Van Leader Huang Gai. With a fair wind his ships sailed toward the Red Cliff.

The easterly wind was strong and the waves rose high. Cao Cao in his central squadron eagerly scanned the opposite shore. When the moon emerged, shedding its light over the river, thousands of silver serpents seemed to play with the waves in innumerable folds. Letting the wind blow full in his face Cao Cao smugly laughed aloud, thinking he was sure to win the battle.

Then a soldier called out, pointing to the river, “There are some sails coming up on the wind.”

Cao Cao went to a higher point and gazed at the sails intently. Soon his men reported to him that the ships all had green dragon flags and among them was a large banner on which was written the name of Huang Gai.

“His coming is really a blessing from Heaven,” he said joyfully.

As the ships drew closer Cheng Yu looked at them very carefully. Suddenly he said, “Those ships are treacherous. Do not let them approach the camp.”

“How do know you that?” asked Cao Cao.

Cheng Yu replied, “If they were laden with grain they would lie deep in the water. But these are light and float easily. The southeast wind is very strong tonight—if they mean treachery, how can we defend ourselves?”

Cao Cao understood at once. Then he asked, “Who will go and stop them?”

Wen Ping volunteered. “I am quite used to fighting on water,” he said. “I will go.”

Then he sprang into a small light craft and sailed out, followed by a dozen scout boats, which came at his call. Standing in the prow of his boat he called out to those advancing toward them, “Don’t approach, you southern ships!

Anchor there in midstream. This is the order of the prime minister."

His soldiers all yelled to the southerners to lower their sails. The shout had not died away when a bowstring twanged and Wen Ping fell down into the boat with an arrow in his left arm. Confusion reigned on his boat and all the other boats fled back to camp.

By then the southern ships were only a couple of li from Cao Cao's camp. Huang Gai waved his sword and the leading ships were set alight—under the force of the strong wind, this soon gained strength and the ships became as fiery arrows. Soon, the whole twenty ships of fire dashed into Cao Cao's naval force.

All of Cao Cao's ships caught fire and as they were firmly chained together not one of them could escape from the calamity. From across the river came the roar of a signal bomb and fire ships came on from all sides at once. The surface of the three rivers was speedily covered with fire, which flew before the wind from one ship to another. The whole sky and earth were lit up with flames.

Cao Cao looked toward his camps on shore and found several of them already ablaze. Huang Gai leaped into a small boat and dashed through the fire to look for Cao Cao. Seeing the immediate danger, Cao Cao was about to make for the land when Zhang Liao came up with a small boat and helped him into it. No sooner had they left the big ship than it, too, was aflame. Zhang Liao and the others got Cao Cao out of the thick of the fire and dashed for the bank.

Huang Gai, seeing a man in a red robe get into a small boat, guessed it must be Cao Cao, so he urged his boat to press on. Sword in hand, he shouted, “Stop fleeing, Cao Cao! Huang Gai is here.”

Cao Cao moaned in distress. At this moment Zhang Liao fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at Huang Gai, shooting at short range. The roaring of the wind and the flames prevented Huang Gai from hearing the twang of the string and he was wounded in the shoulder. He fell and rolled over into the water.

He fell in peril of water when flames were high;

Ere cudgel bruises had faded, an arrow struck.

Whether Huang Gai would survive or not will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* According to Chinese medicine, qi is the driving force that regulates the functioning of various organs in the human body. Notice the pun in Zhuge Liang’s reply—as qi can also mean “air,” Zhuge Liang was seemingly talking about Zhou Yu’s illness, but actually implying his concern for the lack of a southeasterly wind.

CHAPTER FIFTY

Zhuge Liang Foresees the Huarong Episode

Guan Yu Lets Cao Cao Escape Out of Friendship

At the end of the last chapter Zhang Liao shot an arrow at Huang Gai, who fell down into the river, wounded in the shoulder. Then he rescued Cao Cao from immediate danger. By the time they found horses to get ashore, confusion had run rampant among his troops.

As Han Dang braved fire and smoke to attack Cao Cao's naval forces, he was suddenly told by his soldiers that there was a man clinging to the rudder of their boat and shouting to him by his familiar name. Han Dang listened carefully and recognized the voice of his friend Huang Gai, who was calling to him for help.

"That's Huang Gai!" he cried and quickly pulled him out of the water. He saw that Huang Gai was wounded by an arrow. He bit out the shaft of the arrow but the point was still deeply buried in the flesh. He hastily pulled off his friend's wet clothes and cut out the metal arrowhead with a dagger, then tore up one of the flags and bound up the wound. Then Han Dang gave his friend his own fighting robe to wear and sent him off in a small boat back to camp for further treatment.

Huang Gai's narrow escape from drowning was due to his natural affinity for water. Although it was bitterly cold and he was heavy with armor when he fell into the river, he still managed to survive.

It was indeed a great battle at the junction of the three rivers that day! And a fierce fight at the Red Cliff! Flames seemed to spread over all the wide surface of the waters and the earth quaked with the roar of fighting. Three of Zhou Yu's mighty squadrons attacked at the same time. Han Dang and Jiang Qin closed in from the west of the Red Cliff, Zhou Tai and Chen Wu struck from the east, while Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu assaulted the center with the main fleet.

Fire was reinforced by the efforts of the soldiers and the soldiers were aided by the ferocity of fire. Under the thrusts of spears and the flights of arrows, burnt by fire and drowned by water, an incalculable number of Cao Cao's men lost their lives.

When Wei and Wu fought the battle at Red Cliff

Vanished from the water were thousands of ships,
For there the fierce flames burned them utterly.
Zhou Yu for his lord gained the victory.

Let us leave for a while the story of the battle on the river and follow Zhou Yu's troops on the land. Gan Ning, who had taken the spy Cai Zhong with him to Wulin, had penetrated into the recesses of Cao Cao's camp. Then he slew the spy with one slash of his sword and set fire to the grass. At this signal Lu Meng also put fire to the grass in more than a dozen places to support Gan Ning. They were aided by two other

officers who also started a fire and raised a shout. All at once the noise of battle drums was on all sides.

Cao Cao and the faithful Zhang Liao, with a small party of horsemen, fled through the burning forest. They could see no road in front—all seemed on fire. Presently Mao Jie and Wen Ping, with a few more horse-men, joined them. Cao Cao bade the soldiers seek a way through. Zhang Liao pointed out that the only suitable place to escape was through Wulin, so Cao Cao made for it at once.

They had gone but a short distance when they were overtaken by a party of their enemy and a voice cried, "Halt, Cao Cao!" It was Lu Meng, whose ensign soon appeared silhouetted against the fiery background. Cao Cao urged his small party of fugitives forward, bidding Zhang Liao to engage Lu Meng. Soon after, he saw the light of torches in front and from a gorge rushed out another force. The leader cried, "Ling Tong is here!"

Cao Cao was scared—his liver and gall both felt like they were being torn from within. But just then, from his side he saw another troop approach and a voice cried, "Do not be alarmed, my lord! Xu Huang is here to rescue you."

A confused battle followed and the fugitives managed to break through the enemy forces and flee toward the north. However, soon they saw another troop camped by the side of a hill. Xu Huang went ahead to reconnoiter and found the officers in command were two of their own men who had once been in the service of Yuan Shao. They had 3,000 northern men in their camp. They had seen the sky redden

with the flames, but, unaware of the real situation, dared not make any move.

Cao Cao was grateful for this fresh help. Leading a thousand men, he sent these two to clear the road ahead, while the others remained as his guards. He now felt more secure.

The two went forward, but before they had gone ten li they heard a shouting and a party of soldiers came out, whose leader shouted: “Gan Ning is here!”

They tried to put up a fight but the fearsome Gan Ning turned out to be more than they could manage. One of them was killed before he could even engage and the other fell in the first bout. Both of them being dead, the soldiers fled to give Cao Cao the bad news. The only hope for Cao Cao at this time was to get assistance from his troops in Hefei.

However, Sun Quan had already barred the road to Hefei. When he saw the fire on the rivers, Sun Quan knew that his men had won the day, so he ordered Lu Xun to raise torches to give the signal. Seeing this, Taishi Ci came to join forces with Lu Xun and together they assaulted Cao Cao, who had to turn toward Yiling. On the road he fell in with Zhang He and ordered him to stay in the rear to protect the retreat. He pressed on as quickly as possible until the fifth watch when, looking back, he found that the glare of fire was some distance away and he felt safer. He asked his men about the name of this place. They told him it was west of Wulin and north of Yidu. Seeing the thickly crowded trees, the steep hills, and narrow passes, he threw up his head and laughed loudly.

“Why do you laugh?” asked the officers.

“I am laughing at none other than Zhou Yu, who is not crafty enough, and Zhuge Liang, who is not clever enough,” said Cao Cao. “If they had only set an ambush here, as I would have done, why, there would be no escape for Cao Cao’s forces.”

He had scarcely finished his words when from both sides came a deafening roll of drums and flames sprang up to the sky. Cao Cao nearly fell off his horse, he was so startled. And from the side dashed forth a troop, with Zhao Yun as the leader, who cried, “By the order of our military advisor, I have long been waiting here for you!”

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang and Zhang He to engage this new opponent and he himself rode off into the smoke and fire. Zhao Yun did not pursue but only captured his banners, so Cao Cao was able to escape.

The faint light of dawn showed a great black cloud all around, and the southeast wind had not ceased blowing. Suddenly there was a heavy downpour of rain, wetting everyone to the skin, but still Cao Cao maintained his headlong flight, until the hunger of the men made a halt imperative. He told the men to forage in the villages for grain and find means to make a fire. But when these had been found and they began to cook a meal, another troop came along. Once again Cao Cao was terrified but to his great joy, these proved to be his faithful officers Xu Chu and Li Dian escorting his advisors.

As he gave the order to advance again he asked what place lay ahead, and was told that there were two roads, one leading

to the highway to South Yiling and the other, a mountain road to North Yiling.

“Which is the shorter way to Nanjun and Jiangling?” asked Cao Cao.

“Take the road to South Yiling and then through Gourd Pass,” was the reply.

So he gave orders to march that way. By the time they reached Gourd Pass the men were almost starving and could march no further; the horses, too, were worn out. Many had fallen by the roadside. A halt was then called. Some of the soldiers still had cooking pans with them and others had taken food by force from villagers. They found some dry spots beside the hills where they could rest and cook. And there they began to prepare a meal, boiling grain and roasting strips of horse-flesh. Then they took off their wet clothes and spread them out to dry. The beasts, too, were unsaddled and turned out to graze.

Seated under some trees in a wood Cao Cao suddenly looked up and laughed loud and long. His companions, remembering the sequel of his last laugh, said, “Just now, sir, you laughed at Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang— which resulted in the arrival of Zhao Yun and the loss of many men for us. Why do you laugh now?”

“I am laughing again at the ignorance of these two. If I were in their place, and conducting their campaign, I should have set an ambush here for us when we were tired. Then, even if we managed to escape, we would suffer severe losses. I am laughing at them for their lack of foresight.”

Even as he spoke there rose a great yell. Thoroughly startled, Cao Cao leaped upon his horse without even putting on his armor. Many of the soldiers failed to catch their horses in their eagerness to flee. In no time fire and smoke sprang up on every side and filled the mouth of the valley. A force was arrayed before them and at the head was Zhang Fei, seated on his steed with his great spear leveled.

"Where do you think you are going, you rebel?" he shouted.

The sight of the terrible warrior sent a chill into them all. Then Xu Chu, mounted on a saddleless horse, rode up to engage him and Zhang Liao and Xu Huang galloped to his aid. The three fought with Zhang Fei and a melee followed. Taking advantage of this, Cao Cao made off at top speed. His officers soon fled after him and Zhang Fei pursued. However, Cao Cao, by dint of hard riding, got away and gradually the pursuers were outdistanced—but many of his officers had received wounds. As they were fleeing some soldiers came up to ask, "There are two roads before us. Which shall we take?"

"Which is the shorter?' asked Cao Cao.

"The high road is the more level, but it is fifty li longer than the path which leads to Huarong. But the nearer way is narrow and dangerous, full of pits and holes."

Cao Cao sent men up to the top of a hill to reconnoiter. They returned to report that there were several columns of smoke rising from the hills along the path, while the high road seemed quiet.

Then Cao Cao ordered them to lead the way along the narrow pathway.

“Where smoke arises there are surely soldiers,” remarked the officers. “Why do you want to take that way?”

“Don’t you know what the Book of War says? Falsehood may be the truth and truth, falsehood. That fellow Zhuge Liang is very sly. He has sent men to make a fire there to prevent us from taking that way and yet he has laid an ambush on the high road waiting for us. I have seen through his trick and I will not fall a victim to his wiles.”

“Your wisdom has no equal, sir,” said the officers.

And the soldiers were sent along the pathway. The men were starving and the horses weary. Some had been scorched by the flames and had to lean on sticks to plod onwards; others were wounded by arrows or spear thrusts and they struggled on with what remained of their strength. All were soaking wet and none were properly clad. Their weapons and banners were in a deplorable state. Few of the horses had saddles or bridles, for in the confusion of pursuit these had been abandoned. In the bitter cold of winter their suffering was indescribable.

Noticing that the leading party had stopped advancing, Cao Cao sent someone to ask the reason for the halt. The man returned and said, “The path is narrow and after the rain in the morning water has collected in the pits so that the horses are bogged down in the mire and cannot move.”

Cao Cao flared up in a rage and said, “Soldiers are supposed to build roads to cut through a hill and construct bridges to cross a stream. Can such a thing as mud stay an army?”

So he ordered the old, weak, and wounded to go to the rear and come on as they could, while the strong and robust were to cut down trees and gather plants and reeds to fill up the holes. And it was to be done without delay, death being the punishment for those who disobeyed.

So the men were compelled to dismount and fell trees and cut bamboo to level the path. Fearing pursuit, Cao Cao ordered three officers to lead a hundred swordsmen to hasten the soldiers and slay any that did not work fast enough.

By then the soldiers were so hungry and exhausted that they fell to the ground. Cao Cao, however, still ordered men and horses to move on and many were trodden to death. Cries of misery were heard the whole length of the way.

“What are you howling for?” raged Cao Cao. “Life or death is fated. Anyone who howls will be put to death.”

One third of his followers had fallen behind, another third filled up the pits and hollows, so that only one third escorted Cao Cao. Eventually they went past the precipitous part of the road and on to moderately level ground. Cao Cao turned to look at his following and saw he had barely three hundred men, none of whom were fully equipped for battle.

But he still urged them to press on, and when the officers told him the horses were exhausted and must rest a while, he replied: “We can rest when we get to Jingzhou.”

So they moved on. They had gone only a few li when Cao Cao flourished his whip and broke once again into loud laughter.

“What is there to laugh about?” asked the officers.

“People say Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang are able and crafty but I think they are merely a couple of incompetents. If an ambush had been placed here we would all be prisoners.”

He had not finished this speech when a bomb exploded and 500 men with swords in their hands appeared on both sides and blocked the way. The leader was Guan Yu, holding the famous Blue Dragon sword and be-striding the Red Hare steed. At the sight of him Cao Cao’s men were so scared that their very souls seemed to leave them and they gazed into each others’ faces in panic.

“Since there is no way out,” said Cao Cao, “we must fight to the death.”

“Even if we men are not afraid, the horses are spent,” said the officers. “How can we fight?”

Cheng Yu said, “I have always known that Guan Yu acts proudly to those above him but kindly to those beneath him—he defies the strong, but is gentle with the weak. He discriminates between gratitude and grudge and is always righteous and true. You have shown him kindness, and if you remind him of that we will be able to escape this danger.”

Cao Cao agreed to try. He rode out to the front, bowed to Guan Yu and said, “General, I trust you have been keeping well.”

Guan Yu bowed in return and said, “By the order of our advisor I have been waiting for you for a long time, sir.”

“I am defeated and my situation is desperate. Now I have no way out and I trust you, General, will not forget our old friendship.”

“Though indeed you were kind to me in those days, I have repaid you by slaying two of your most feared enemies and relieving the siege of Baima. As for the business in hand, I cannot allow my personal feelings to outweigh public duty.”

“Do you remember how you slew my six officers at the five passes? The noble man values righteousness. You are well versed in the histories and must recall the story of Yugong Zisi, the ancient archer, and his pursuit of his opponent Zizhuo Ruzi. Yugong was unwilling to harm his opponent when he found him unable to defend himself because of illness.”

Guan Yu was indeed a man with the highest sense of righteousness. He could not forget the great kindness he had received at Cao Cao’s hands and the magnanimity he had shown over what happened at the five passes. Besides, his compassion was roused at the sight of Cao Cao’s panic-stricken men, who were all on the verge of tears. He could not bear to press him hard so he turned his steed and said to his followers, “Spread out.”

Evidently this was meant to let Cao Cao escape. Seeing this, Cao Cao dashed through with his officers, and when Guan Yu turned around they had already passed. He uttered a great shout to the remaining troops of Cao Cao, who jumped off their horses and knelt on the ground crying for mercy. Guan Yu took great pity on them and could not bring himself to harm them. Just then, Zhang Liao rode up and the memory of their friendship melted Guan Yu's heart. Heaving a long sigh, he allowed all of them to go free.

Cao Cao, his army lost, fled to Huarong,

There in the narrow path he met Guan Yu.
Unable to forget his great kindness,
Guan Yu freed the dragon in plight.

Having escaped this danger Cao Cao hastened to get out of the valley. He glanced back and saw only twenty-seven horsemen still following him. Toward dusk they reached Nanjun, where again they came upon what they took to be more enemies. Cao Cao thought the end had surely come, but to his delight they were his own men and his fear died down. Cao Ren, who was the leader, said that he had heard of the defeat, but was afraid to venture far from his charge, so he only tried to meet him at a short distance from his camp.

"I was nearly unable to see you again," said Cao Cao.

The fugitives at last found repose in the city. Soon they were joined by Zhang Liao, who told them of the magnanimity of Guan Yu.

When Cao Cao mustered the miserable remnant of his men together he found most of them were wounded and he told them to rest. Cao Ren prepared wine to console his master. All the advisors were also present. And as he drank, Cao Cao suddenly looked up to the sky and broke into violent weeping.

His advisors were perplexed. “When you were trying to escape from the tiger’s cave you showed no sign of fear,” they said. “Now that you are safe in the city, where men have food and the horses have forage, where all you have to do is to prepare for revenge, suddenly you lose heart and grieve. Why is this?”

Cao Cao replied, “I am thinking of my friend Guo Jia. Had he been alive he would not have let me suffer this loss.”

He beat his breast and, calling his deceased advisor by name, wept passionately. The implicit reproach shamed the advisors into silence. The next day, Cao Cao called his cousin Cao Ren to him and said, “I’m going to the capital to prepare another army for revenge. You are to guard this district and I leave with you a sealed plan. You are only to open it in case of emergency, and then you are to act as directed. Then Zhou Yu will not dare to undermine you.”

“Who is to guard Hefei and Xiangyang?”

“I have already assigned Xiahou Dun to hold Xiangyang and you are to take care of Jingzhou as well. As for Hefei, it is strategically most important and I am sending Zhang Liao there as commander and Li Dian and Yue Jin as his aides. If you run into difficulties, send news to me at once.”

Having arranged these dispositions, Cao Cao mounted and set off with the rest of his men. He also took with him the officers who had come over to his side when Jingzhou fell into his hands.

After they left, Cao Ren placed his brother Cao Hong in charge of the south of Yiling, as well as Nanjun, to guard against possible attacks from Zhou Yu.

Guan Yu, having allowed Cao Cao to flee, found his way back to the headquarters. By this time the others had also returned, bringing spoils of horses, weapons, equipment, money, and grain. Only Guan Yu came back empty-handed. When he arrived Zhuge Liang was congratulating Liu Bei on his success. As soon as Guan Yu was announced Zhuge Liang rose from his seat and went out to welcome him, bearing a cup of wine.

"Congratulations, General!" he said. "It's a great joy to know that you have done a really splendid service and have removed the country's worst evil. I ought to have come out a long way to congratulate you."

Guan Yu could say nothing.

Zhuge Liang continued, "Are you annoyed because we haven't come out to welcome you on the road?" Turning to those about him he said reproachfully, "Why didn't you report earlier?"

"I'm here to ask for death," said Guan Yu.

"Could it be that Cao Cao didn't come that way?"

“Yes, he did. But I was incompetent enough to let him escape.”

“Then which officers and men have you captured?”

“None.”

“In that case you must have intentionally allowed him to escape for his past kindness to you,” said Zhuge Liang. “But since you have signed a written pledge you will have to suffer the penalty.”

Then he called in the guards to take Guan Yu out and put him to death.

He risked his very life for friendship’s sake,

And for ages to come gained a fine name.

What would actually befall Guan Yu will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

A Great Battle Is Fought Between North and South

Zhuge Liang Provokes Zhou Yu to Anger for the First Time

At the end of the last chapter Guan Yu was about to be put to death for allowing Cao Cao to escape. Then Liu Bei said to Zhuge Liang, “We three pledged ourselves to live and die together. Although my brother has done wrong I cannot bear to break our oath. I hope you will only record this misdeed and let him atone for his fault later by some meritorious service.”

So the sentence was remitted.

In the meantime, Zhou Yu assembled his officers and men, noted the special services of each, and submitted full reports to his master. The surrendered soldiers were all sent across the river. Then a feast was given to celebrate the victory.

The next step was to attack and capture Nanjun. The army set up five camps on the riverbank, with Zhou Yu’s tent in the center, where he summoned his officers and advisors to a council. At this moment Sun Qian arrived with congratulations from Liu Bei. He was admitted and, having saluted Zhou Yu politely, Sun Qian said: “My lord sent me to

thank you for your great kindness and to bring you some trifling gifts."

"Where is Liu Bei?" asked Zhou Yu.

"He is now encamped by the You River."

"Is Zhuge Liang there, too?" asked Zhou Yu, taken aback.

"Yes, both are there," answered Sun Qian.

"Please return first, and I will come in person to thank them."

Zhou Yu accepted the presents and sent Sun Qian back to his master.

Then Lu Su asked him, "Why were you surprised just now?"

Zhou Yu said, "In camping by the You River, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang must have the intention of taking Nanjun. We have spent so much military resources and money that the district is now ours for the taking. But they wish to use what we have already accomplished to their advantage. However, they must remember that I'm not dead yet."

"How can you prevent them?" asked Lu Su.

"I'll go myself and speak with them," said Zhou Yu. "If all goes well, then, let it be so; in case it doesn't, I'll simply slay Liu Bei before he can make an attempt to capture Nanjun."

"I'd like to accompany you," said Lu Su.

So Zhou Yu and his friend started for Liu Bei's camp by the river, taking with them 3,000 light cavalrymen.

Now San Qian, having returned from his trip, went in to see Liu Bei and told him of Zhou Yu's intended visit to thank him for the gifts.

"What is the real purpose of his visit?" asked Liu Bei of his all-wise advisor.

"Is it likely he would come out of simple politeness for these trifling gifts? Of course he has come because of Nanjun."

"But if he brings an army, can we stand against it?" asked Liu Bei.

Then Zhuge Liang told Liu Bei what he should say to Zhou Yu when he came.

To prepare for Zhou Yu's visit, they drew up the warships in the river and ranged the soldiers on the bank. Soon, the arrival of Zhou Yu and Lu Su with an army was announced. Zhao Yun went to welcome them with a cavalry escort. The fine display of military strength was not lost on Zhou Yu and he felt rather uneasy. At the camp gates the guests were met by Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang and led into the tent, where a banquet was prepared in their honor.

Presently, Liu Bei raised his cup in felicitation on the recent victory gained by his guests. The banquet proceeded and after a few more rounds of wine Zhou Yu said, "You have moved your troops here. Are you thinking of taking Nanjun?"

“We hear you are going to occupy the place so we have come to assist,” replied Liu Bei. “Should you not take it, then we will.”

Zhou Yu laughed. “We of the east have long thought about conquering this district. Now that it is within our grasp we will surely take it.”

Liu Bei said, “There is always some uncertainty. Before he departed, Cao Cao ordered Cao Ren to guard the district, and it is quite certain that he must have left some effective strategy behind him. Besides, Cao Ren is a very brave warrior. I fear you may not get it, General.”

“Well, if we do not succeed, sir, then you may try to take it,” said Zhou Yu.

“Here are witnesses to your words,” said Liu Bei, naming Lu Su and Zhuge Liang at the table. “I hope you will never regret what you have just stated.”

Lu Su hesitated and seemed unwilling to bear witness to this, but Zhou Yu said, “Once I have spoken I never regret.”

“This speech of yours, sir, is very fair,” interjected Zhuge Liang. “You will try first, but if the place does not fall, there is no reason why my lord should not attempt to capture it.”

The two visitors then took their leave and rode away. As soon as they had left, Liu Bei turned to Zhuge Liang and said, “Just now I replied to Zhou Yu according to your instructions. However, although I did so, I have turned it over and over in my mind without finding any reason in what I said. Here I

am, isolated and weak, without a single foot of land to call my own. I desire to get possession of Nanjun so that I might have, at least, a temporary shelter—but if we let Zhou Yu attack it first then the district will fall to Wu. How can I get the city?"

Zhuge Liang laughed and replied, "Do you remember I advised you to take Jingzhou in the past but you would not listen? So you want it now?"

"But the city belonged to Liu Biao at that time and I could not bear to attack it. Now that it belongs to Cao Cao I can certainly do so."

"These things are nothing to worry about," replied the advisor. "Let Zhou Yu go and fight. Sooner or later, my lord, I will make you sit comfortably in that city."

"But what plan do you have in mind?"

Zhuge Liang told him.

Liu Bei was greatly satisfied with the reply and so he maintained his position at the riverbank and patiently awaited an opportunity.

In the meantime, Zhou Yu and Lu Su returned to their own camp and the latter asked, "Why did you promise Liu Bei that he might attack Nanjun?"

"I can take the city with a flick of my fingers," replied Zhou Yu. "That promise was a mere gesture of generosity."

Then he inquired among his officers for a volunteer to attack the city. Jiang Qin offered himself, and was put in command of the vanguard of 5,000 veterans, with Xu Sheng and Ding Feng to aid him. They were to move across the river at once, and Zhou Yu himself would follow with the supporting troops.

On the other side, Cao Ren ordered Cao Hong to guard Yiling and so hold one corner of a triangular defense. When the news came that the troops of Wu had crossed the Han River, Cao Ren decided to defend the city firmly and not to give battle.

But Niu Jin, one of his valiant officers, said impetuously, “It is cowardly to let the enemy approach the city walls and not offer battle. Our men, lately worsted, need heartening and must deomonstrate their mettle. Give me five hundred veterans and I will fight them.”

Cao Ren agreed to this brave offer and so the small force went out of the city. At once Ding Feng came to combat Niu Jin and they fought a few bouts. Then Ding Feng pretended to be defeated, gave up the fight, and retreated into his own lines. Niu Jin followed him hard. When he had got within the Wu formation, at a signal from Ding Feng, the army closed in all around and Niu Jin was surrounded. He pushed right and left, but could find no way out. Seeing this from the wall tower, Cao Ren donned his armor and came out of the city at the head of his own bold company of cavalrymen and burst into the men of Wu to try to rescue his colleague. Xu Sheng dashed forward to engage him but was overpowered and Cao Ren fought his way in and rescued Niu Jin.

However, when he looked back, Cao Ren saw that several score of his men were still trapped in the middle, unable to make their way out. He turned and dashed again into the enemy formation to their rescue. This time he met Jiang Qin, who blocked his way, but together with Niu Jin he managed to break through. Then his brother Cao Chun also came up with support and the battle ended in a defeat for the men of Wu.

So Cao Ren went back victorious, while the unhappy Jiang Qin returned to report his failure. Zhou Yu was very angry and would have put to death his hapless subordinate but for the intervention of the other officers.

Then he prepared for another attack, which he would lead. But Gan Ning said, "General, do not be in too much of a hurry. Let me go first and take Yiling so as to destroy their triangular defense, then you can capture Nanjun."

Zhou Yu accepted the plan and Gan Ning, with 3,000 men, went to attack Yiling.

When news of the approaching army reached him, Cao Ren called the advisor Chen Jiao to his side for counsel.

"If Yiling is lost then Nanjun will be lost, too," said Chen Jiao. "Help must be sent quickly."

Therefore Cao Chun and Niu Jin were sent by secret ways to the aid of Cao Hong. Before they went, Cao Chun dispatched a messenger to Cao Hong, telling him to meet his enemy and induce them into the city.

So when Gan Ning drew near, Cao Hong went out to engage him. After a score of rounds Cao Hong fled in defeat and Gan Ning took the city. However, as evening fell Cao Hong came back with reinforcements and Gan Ning was besieged inside the city he had just captured. Scouts went off immediately to tell Zhou Yu of this sudden change of circumstances, which greatly alarmed him.

"Let's divide our force and hasten to his rescue," said Cheng Pu.

"This place is of the utmost importance," said Zhou Yu. "What if Cao Ren should attack when we are away?"

"But he is one of our best officers and must be rescued," said Lu Meng.

"I'd like to go myself to his aid, but who can I leave here in my place?" said Zhou Yu.

"You can leave Ling Tong here," suggested Lu Meng. "I will push on ahead first and you, General, can bring up the rear. In less than ten days we will have won the battle."

"Are you willing to act for me?" said Zhou Yu to Ling Tong.

"For ten days, yes," said Ling Tong. "But not more than that."

Ling Tong's consent pleased Zhou Yu, who started at once, leaving an army of 10,000 men for the defense of the camp. Lu Meng said to his chief, "South of Yiling is a bypath from where it is easy to make an attack on Nanjun. Let's send five hundred men to fell trees and barricade this path so that

horses cannot pass. In case of defeat the enemy will surely take this way and will be compelled to abandon their horses, which we will capture."

Zhou Yu approved and the men were sent to barricade the path. When the main army drew near Yiling, Zhou Yu asked for volunteers to break through the besiegers and rescue Gan Ning. Zhou Tai offered himself. He girded on his sword, mounted his steed, and burst into the enemy force. Very soon he had reached the wall of the city.

Seeing the approach of his friend, Gan Ning went out to welcome him inside. When Zhou Tai told him that the commander had come to his relief, Gan Ning at once ordered his men to have a good meal and be prepared to support the attack of the rescuers.

When the news of the approach of Zhou Yu had reached the besiegers they dispatched scouts to report it to Cao Ren in Nanjun, while at the same time they prepared to repel the assailants. So when Zhou Yu's army came up he encountered opposition. However, he was soon reinforced by Gan Ning and Zhou Tai, who rushed out of the city and attacked their enemy on two sides, throwing Cao Hong's men into sheer confusion. The men of Wu advanced triumphantly and the defeated troops fled by the path south of the city as Lu Meng had predicted; but finding the way barred with felled trees and other obstacles, they had to abandon their horses and go on foot. In this way the men of Wu gained some five hundred steeds.

Zhou Yu, pressing on as quickly as possible toward Nanjun, came upon Cao Ren, who had come to aid his comrades in

Yiling. The two armies engaged and fought a battle which lasted till late in the evening, when darkness compelled both armies to withdraw. Cao Ren returned to Nanjun.

During the night he called his officers to a council. Cao Hong said, "We're in an extremely dangerous situation now that we have lost Yiling. Why don't we open the letter our lord has left us and see what plan he has arranged for us to pull through this peril."

"You're quite right," replied Cao Ren. Then he opened the letter and read it. His face lighted up with joy and he at once issued orders to have breakfast prepared at the fifth watch. At daylight the army moved out of the city, leaving only a semblance of occupation in the shape of banners arranged along the walls.

Zhou Yu, after lifting the siege in Yiling, spread out his army outside Nanjun. When he saw the enemy troops coming out of the three gates of the city, he went up to high ground to observe. He found that the flags along the battlements had no men behind them and he noticed that every man coming out of the city carried a bundle at his waist.

Zhou Yu thought to himself, "Cao Ren must be preparing for retreat."

So he went down from his observation stand and sent out an order for two wings of the army to be ready. They were to attack and, in case of success, were to pursue at full speed till the clanging of the gongs should call them to return. Then he took command of the leading force in person and Cheng Pu

commanded the rear to support him. Thus they advanced to attack the city of Nanjun.

The armies being arrayed facing each other, the drums rolled out across the plain. Cao Hong rode forth and challenged, and Zhou Yu, from his place by the standard, ordered Han Dang to respond. The two fought for about thirty bouts, when Cao Hong fled. Then Cao Ren came out to give battle and Zhou Tai rode out at full speed to meet him. These two exchanged a dozen passes and then Cao Ren also fled. His army fell into confusion. At this Zhou Yu gave the signal for the advance of both his wings and their opponents were sorely smitten. Zhou Yu pursued them right to the city wall, but none of Cao Ren's men entered the city. Instead, they went away toward the northwest. Han Dang and Zhou Tai led the front force to press them hard.

Zhou Yu, seeing the city gates standing wide open and no guards on the wall tower, ordered a raid on the city. A few score horsemen rode in first, followed by Zhou Yu himself, who whipped his steed and galloped into the city. From his watch tower Chen Jiao saw him enter and in his heart he applauded the god-like perspicacity of his master Cao Cao.

The clap-clap of a watchman's rattle was then heard. At this signal the hidden archers and crossbowmen let fly their arrows and bolts, which flew forth in a sudden fierce shower, while those who were at the front of the rushing formation went headlong into a deep trench. Zhou Yu managed to pull up in time, but turning to escape, he was wounded by an arrow in the left side and fell to the ground. Niu Jin rushed out from the city to capture him, but Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, at the risk of their own lives, got him away safe.

Then the men of Cao Cao dashed out of the city and wrought confusion among the men of Wu, who trampled upon each other in their eagerness to escape, and many more fell into the trenches. Cheng Pu hastened to pull back, but Cao Ren and Cao Hong came toward him from two different directions. The battle went harshly against the men from the east, till help came from Ling Tong, who drove back their assailants. Satisfied with their success Cao Ren led his men into the city, while the defeated marched back to their own camps.

Zhou Yu, sorely wounded, was taken to his tent and the army physician called in. With iron forceps he extracted the sharp head of the arrow and dressed the wound with a lotion designed to counteract the poison of the metal. But the pain was intense and Zhou Yu could not even eat or drink. The physician said the arrow head had been poisoned and the wound would require a long time to heal. The patient must be kept quiet and guard against any irritation, which would cause the wound to reopen.

So Cheng Pu gave orders that each division was to remain strictly in camp. Three days later Niu Jin came to challenge the men of Wu to battle, but they did not stir. The enemy hurled taunts and insults till the sun had fallen low in the sky, but it was of no avail and Niu Jin withdrew.

The next day Niu Jin returned and repeated his insulting abuse. Cheng Pu dared not tell the wounded commander lest he should be angry. On the third day, becoming more reckless, Niu Jin came to the very gates of their camps, shouting that he had come especially to capture Zhou Yu.

Then Cheng Pu called together his officers and they discussed the feasibility of withdrawal into Wu to seek the opinion of their lord Sun Quan. Ill as he was, Zhou Yu was clear in mind. He knew that the enemy often came to revile him in front of his camp, although none of his officers told him. One day Cao Ren came in person to challenge and there was much rolling of drums and shouting. Cheng Pu, however, remained firm and would not let anyone go out. Then Zhou Yu summoned the officers to his bedside and asked, "What is this noise of drums and shouting?"

"The men are drilling." They told him.

"Why do you deceive me?" said Zhou Yu angrily. "Do you think I don't know that our enemies often come to our gates and insult us? Why doesn't Cheng Pu do anything?"

He sent for Cheng Pu and, when he arrived, asked him the reason for his inaction.

"I see you are ill and the physician has said you are on no account to be provoked to anger, so I dare not tell you about the enemy's challenge."

"And if you don't fight, what do you intend to do?" asked Zhou Yu.

"All of us think we should return to the east first and wait until you have recovered from your wound," said Cheng Pu. "Then we can make another expedition."

After Zhou Yu heard this he sprang up from bed, crying, "He who has lived off his lord's bounty should die in his lord's

battles! To return home with his corpse wrapped in a horse's hide is a happy fate for a soldier! How can you give up the grand design of our country just for my sake?"

So speaking, he proceeded to put on his armor and mount his horse. All the other officers and men were filled with awe at their commander's bravery and loyalty. Then Zhou Yu placed himself at the head of some hundreds of horsemen and went out of the camp gates, where he saw that the enemy had fully arrayed.

Seeing his opponents Cao Ren, standing beneath the standard, flourished his whip and began to hurl abuse at them: "That rogue Zhou Yu must have met his fate! He never dares to face my men."

Before he had completed these insults Zhou Yu suddenly rode out to the front and cried, "Here I am, you rascal! Look at me!"

The enemy were taken aback. But Cao Ren turned to his men and said, "Let's all revile him." And the whole army yelled insults at Zhou Yu.

Zhou Yu grew furious and sent Pan Zhang out to fight. But before he had delivered his first blow Zhou Yu suddenly uttered a loud cry, and he fell to the ground with blood gushing from his mouth.

At this, Cao Ren's army rushed forth to give battle and the men of Wu pressed forward to resist them. A confused struggle followed, but eventually Zhou Yu was borne off safely and taken to his tent.

“Do you feel better?” asked Cheng Pu anxiously.

“It was a ruse of mine,” whispered Zhou Yu in reply.

“But what is it?”

“I’m not really very ill. I only did that to make our enemies think I’m dying so that they will be off their guard. Now send some of our trusted men to fake desertion and tell Cao Ren that I’m dead. That will bring them here tonight to raid our camps and we will have an ambush ready for them. We will trap Cao Ren easily.”

“What an excellent plan!” said Cheng Pu.

Soon from the tent there arose the sound of wailing. The soldiers, greatly alarmed, took up the cry and said to one another, “Our commander has died of his wound.” Each camp displayed many symbols of mourning.

Meanwhile, Cao Ren was in discussion with his officers. He said, “Zhou Yu lost his temper and that has caused his wound to reopen and brought on that flow of blood. You saw him fall to the ground—he will assuredly die soon.”

Just then, guards came in to report that about a dozen men from Zhou Yu’s army had come to surrender and two of them had been formerly their own men who had been captured by their enemy.

Cao Ren sent for the deserters at once and questioned them. They told him that Zhou Yu’s wound had reopened and he had died immediately after he was brought back to camp; that

the officers were all in mourning; and that they had deserted because they had been put to shame by Cheng Pu, the second in command.

Pleased at this news, Cao Ren at once began to arrange a night raid on Zhou Yu's camp, to snatch the body of the dead commander so as to send his head to the capital.

"Success depends on promptitude, so we must act without delay," said Chen Jiao.

Niu Jin was then appointed the van leader and Cao Ren himself led the central force, while his two brothers brought up the rear. Chen Jiao was left to guard the city with a small force.

At the first watch they left the city and moved toward Zhou Yu's camp. When they drew near they found no trace of any man around, only an empty display of flags and spears, evidently to keep up an appearance of occupation. Feeling at once that they had been tricked, they turned to retreat. But a bomb exploded to give the signal for an attack on all four sides. The result was a severe defeat for the raiders. Cao Ren's forces were entirely broken and his men scattered about so that no one part of the beaten army could aid the other.

Cao Ren, with a few horsemen, strove to cut through the encirclement and presently met Cao Hong. The two leaders fled together and by the fifth watch they had got close to Nanjun. Then they heard a beating of drums and Ling Tong appeared before them, obstructing their way. A small skirmish followed but the fugitives managed to escape. Presently, however, they encountered Gan Ning, who

attacked them vigorously. Cao Ren dared not go back to Nanjun, but headed for Xiangyang along the main road. The men of Wu pursued him for a time and then gave up the chase.

Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu then proceeded to Nanjun, where they were startled to see flags all over the walls and every sign of occupation. Before they had recovered from their surprise there appeared an officer who cried, "Pardon, General. I had orders from our advisor to take this city. I'm Zhao Zi-long of Changshan."

Zhou Yu was violently angry and gave orders to assault the city, but from the wall shot out flights of arrows and his men could not stay near the rampart. So he had to withdraw. Then he decided to send Gan Ning to capture Jingzhou and Ling Tong to take Xiangyang. Nanjun could be taken later.

But even as these orders were being given a scout came in hurriedly to report that after taking Nanjun, Zhuge Liang had used Cao Ren's military seal to induce the army in Jingzhou to leave the city and go to the rescue of their commander. Then he sent Zhang Fei to take Jingzhou.

Soon after, another scout came to say that Xiahou Dun, at Xiangyang, had been tricked by Zhuge Liang, who had sent his men to deliver a false dispatch, supported by a military seal, saying that Cao Ren was in danger and needed help. So Xiahou Dun had marched off and in his absence Guan Yu had seized Xiangyang.

Thus the two cities that Zhou Yu wanted had fallen, without the least effort, into the hands of his rival Liu Bei.

“How did Zhuge Liang get Cao Ren’s military seals?” asked Zhou Yu in disbelief.

Cheng Pu replied, “He has seized Chen Jiao and naturally has all the seals at his disposal.”

Zhou Yu uttered a great cry, for at that moment his wound had suddenly burst open.

Three cities fall, but not to us the gain;

Tremendous is the effort but all in vain.

Whether Zhou Yu would die or not will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

Zhuge Liang Defends Himself for Seizing Three Cities

Zhao Yun Uses a Clever Scheme to Capture Guiyang

Zhou Yu's anger at learning that his rival, Zhuge Liang, had seized Nanjun and the other two cities was but natural. And this sudden fit of rage caused his wound to burst open again and he collapsed. After quite a long while he regained consciousness. All his officers entreated him to accept the situation, but he cried, "Nothing but the death of that bumpkin, Zhuge Liang, will assuage my anger!" Then he said to Cheng Pu, "I want you to help me in an attack on Nanjun. I must restore it to our country."

At that moment Lu Su came in, to whom Zhou Yu said, "I simply must battle Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang till it is decided which shall have the upper hand. I must also recapture the city. Please assist me."

"No, you mustn't," replied Lu Su. "We are now at grips with Cao Cao and victory or defeat is uncertain. Our lord has not been successful in overcoming Hefei. If you start fighting Liu Bei it will be like people of the same household destroying each other. Should Cao Cao take advantage of this to make a sudden descent upon us we would be in a perilous condition. Further, you must remember that Liu Bei used to be a good

friend of Cao Cao's and, if the pressure becomes too great, he may relinquish these cities, offer them to Cao Cao and join forces with him to attack our country. That would be a real misfortune."

"I cannot help being angry to think that we used our resources for their benefit," said Zhou Yu.

"Well, let me go and see Liu Bei and reason to him. If I cannot reach an understanding, then attack."

"That's a good idea," cried all those present.

So Lu Su, with his attendants, went away to Nanjun to try to solve the dispute between their two sides. He reached the city wall and called the guards to open the gate for him. Zhao Yun came out to speak with him.

"I want to see your master," said Lu Su. "I have something to say to him."

"My lord is in Jingzhou with our chief advisor," said Zhao Yun.

Lu Su turned away and hastened to Jingzhou. He found the walls adorned with flags and the army in excellent order. In his heart he admired Zhuge Liang and thought what an unusually capable man he was.

The guards reported his arrival and Zhuge Liang ordered them to throw wide the gate and he came out to welcome Lu Su into the official house. After an exchange of greetings,

Zhuge Liang and his visitor took their respective seats. Presently tea was served.

Lu Su said, “My master, Lord of Wu, and the commander of his army, Zhou Yu, have sent me to lay their views before your lord Liu Bei. Not long ago, when Cao Cao led his huge army southward, his real intention was to destroy your lord. Fortunately, our army was able to repulse Cao Cao’s mighty force and so saved him. Therefore Jingzhou with its nine districts ought to belong to us. But by treacherous moves your lord has occupied Jingzhou and Xiangyang, so that we have spent much money and provisions in vain and our armies have fought to no purpose, while your lord has calmly reaped the benefits to the full. This does not seem reasonable.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Zi-jing, you are a man of high intelligence. Why do you speak like that? You know the saying, that all things should return to their owner. These districts have never belonged to Wu, but were the land of Liu Biao, and my master is his brother. Though Liu Biao is dead, his son is here. Should not the uncle assist the nephew to recover his own land? What’s wrong with this?”

“If the rightful heir Liu Qi had claimed these cities it would have been understandable. But I presume he is at Jiangxia, and not here.”

“Would you like to see him?” said Zhuge Liang.

Then he told the servants to request Liu Qi to come. Presently the young man appeared behind the screen, supported by two attendants. Addressing Lu Su he said, “I am too weak to salute you properly. Please pardon me.”

Lu Su, taken aback, fell silent. After Liu Qi was helped in, he said, “But if the heir is no more, what then?”

“While he is alive we will support him to hold the districts. Should he be gone, then the matter can be further discussed.”

“Should he die, then you ought to return these cities to us,” said Lu Su.

“That’s reasonable,” agreed Zhuge Liang.

Then Zhuge Liang gave a banquet to entertain his guest and, that being over, Lu Su took his leave. He hastened back to his own camp and gave Zhou Yu an account of his mission.

“But what is there for us if Liu Qi dies?” said Zhou Yu. “He is in his very youth. When will these places be returned to us?”

“Rest assured, General,” said Lu Su. “I will guarantee the return of these places.”

“Have you some plans?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Well, I see Liu Qi has indulged too freely in wine and women. He looks miserably emaciated and he even gasps for breath. He is such a wreck beyond cure that I will not give him half a year’s life. Then I will go to Liu Bei and he will be unable to make any excuses.”

But Zhou Yu was still not appeased. Just then came a messenger from Sun Quan, who said, “Our lord is laying siege to Hefei but in several battles has had no victory. He

now orders you to withdraw from here and go to Hefei to help him."

So Zhou Yu was compelled to withdraw to Caisang, where he began to give attention to the recovery of his health. He sent Cheng Pu with the marine and land forces to Hefei, ready for Sun Quan's use.

Liu Bei was exceedingly satisfied with the possession of his new territory and his thoughts turned to how he could secure his rule in the three cities. Yi Ji came to him to suggest a plan and, remembering how he had saved his life in the past, Liu Bei received him most graciously. He asked Yi Ji to take a seat and inquired about his proposal.

Yi Ji said, "If you need a plan to consolidate your occupation of the new districts, why not seek wise men and ask them for advice?"

"Where can I find these wise men?" asked Liu Bei.

Yi Ji replied, "In this district there is a certain Ma family whose five sons are all known to be men of ability. The youngest is called Ma Su and the ablest is Ma Liang, who has white hairs in his eyebrows. Villagers say that among the five sons, the one with the white eyebrows is the best. Why not get this man to draw up a plan for you, sir?"

So Liu Bei told his men to request Ma Liang's presence. Ma Liang came and was received with great respect. When he was asked to suggest a plan for the security of the newly acquired district he said, "Besieged as it is on all sides Jingzhou will probably not be able to hold out for long. You

should let Master Liu Qi remain here to nurse his illness and summon his father's former officers to protect the place. Obtain an edict from the emperor to appoint him governor of Jingzhou and the people will be content. Then conquer the four neighboring towns of Wuling, Changsha, Guiyang, and Lingling and with the resources you will thus acquire, you will have the means for further plans. That should be your policy."

"Which of the four districts should be taken first?" asked Liu Bei.

"The nearest, Lingling, which lies to the west of the Xiang River. Next, seize Wuling and after that, the other two."

Ma Liang was given an appointment of office, with Yi Ji to assist him. Then Liu Bei consulted Zhuge Liang about sending Liu Qi to Xiangyang, so that Guan Yu could be free to return to Jingzhou. Then an army composed of 15,000 men began its march for an attack on Lingling, with Zhang Fei leading the van, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang commanding the main body, and Zhao Yun guarding the rear. Guan Yu was left to hold Jingzhou while Mi Zhu and Liu Feng were left to guard Jiangling.

The Prefect of Lingling was Liu Du. When he heard of the approach of Liu Bei's army he called in his son, Liu Xian, for counsel. The son, quite confident, said, "Have no anxiety, father. They may have such strong officers as Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun, but we have our warrior, Xing Dao-rong, who is match for any number of men. He can withstand them."

So Liu Xian and this warrior were entrusted with the job of subduing the invaders. At the head of 10,000 soldiers they set out and made a camp about thirty li from the city, using the shelter of some hills and a river. Soon their scouts brought news that Zhuge Liang was drawing near with an army. Xing Dao-rong went forth to oppose him. When both sides were deployed, Xing Dao-rong rode to the front, holding a heavy battle-ax in his hand. In a mighty voice he cried, "Rebels, how dare you enter our territory?"

From the center of the opposing army appeared a cluster of yellow flags; when the flags parted, there rolled out a four-wheeled carriage in which sat, very erect, a man dressed in a white robe, with a turban on his head and a feather fan in his hand. Beckoning Xing Dao-rong to approach with his fan, he said, "I am Zhuge Liang of Nanyang. I had but employed some of my little schemes and Cao Cao, with his million men, was utterly routed. How, then, can you hope to oppose me? I now offer you peace—it will be well for you to surrender."

Xing Dao-rong laughed derisively. "Cao Cao's defeat at the Red Cliff was owing to the plan of Zhou Yu—you had nothing to do with it. How dare you try to deceive me?"

So saying he swung up his battle-ax and came running toward Zhuge Liang. At this the carriage turned and retired within the lines, which closed up behind it. Xing Dao-rong came rushing on. As he reached his opponents' battle line the men fell away on both sides and let him enter. In the distance he could see the yellow flags in the center and he concluded that Zhuge Liang must be there, so he pursued anxiously. At the foot of a hill the flags turned and stopped. Then suddenly they parted, but instead of the four-wheeled carriage there came a

ferocious warrior, holding a long spear and mounted on a curvetting steed. It was Zhang Fei, who dashed at Xing Dao-rong with a tremendous roar.

Xing Dao-rong whirled up his battle-ax to meet Zhang Fei. But after four or five bouts he saw that there was no chance of victory for him, so he turned his horse and fled. Zhang Fei pursued, the air shaking with the thunder of his voice. At the same time the ambushers on both sides appeared amid tremendous shouting. Xing Dao-rong rushed desperately into their midst and broke through. But in front appeared another warrior barring the way, who called out, "I am Zhao Zi-long of Changshan."

Xing Dao-rong knew that his opponent was too powerful for him—he could neither fight nor fly. So he dismounted and pleaded for submission. He was bound up and taken before Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. Liu Bei ordered him out for execution, but Zhuge Liang hastily checked him.

"We will accept your submission if you capture Liu Xian for us," said Zhuge Liang.

The captive accepted the offer without the least hesitation, and when Zhuge Liang asked him how he intended to do it, he replied, "If you release me, I will use my cleverness of speech to convince Liu Xian. You can raid his camp this evening and I will be your helper on the inside. I will make Liu Xian a prisoner and will hand him over to you. He being captured, his father will surrender at once."

Liu Bei doubted the good faith of the man, but Zhuge Liang said he could answer for him. Therefore he was set free and

went back to his own camp, where he related all that had occurred to his master Liu Xian.

“What can we do then?” asked Liu Xian.

“We can meet trick with trick. Put our soldiers in an ambush tonight outside our camp while within, everything will appear as usual. When Zhuge Liang comes we will capture him.”

The ambush was prepared. To their delight, at the second watch a troop really came out of the darkness and emerged at their camp gate. Each raider carried a torch and they began to set fire to all about them. Out dashed Liu Xian and Xing Dao-rong from two sides and the incendiaries immediately fled. The two pursued them, but when about ten li from the camp the fugitives suddenly disappeared. Much surprised, the two hastened to find their way back to their own camp.

The fire was still burning and from behind the flames they could see Zhang Fei coming out. Liu Xian called out to his companion not to enter the burning camp, but to go with him to attack Zhuge Liang’s stockade.

So they turned again, but hardly had they advanced ten li when Zhao Yun and his troop suddenly descended on the road. With one thrust of his spear Zhao Yun pierced Xing Dao-rong to death. Liu Xian turned to flee, but Zhang Fei was close upon him and captured him while he was still seated on his horse. He was bound and taken to camp. When he saw Zhuge Liang he laid the blame on his fallen officer, saying that he had listened to his evil counsel against his own wish. Zhuge Liang ordered guards to loosen his bonds and then gave him proper dress to wear and wine to calm him down.

After he had recovered from his fright Zhuge Liang sent him back to his father to persuade him to yield.

"And if he does not, when the city is destroyed every one of your family will be put to death," said Zhuge Liang as he left.

The son returned to the city and told his father of Zhuge Liang's kindness in sparing his life and asked him to submit. Liu Du was persuaded and decided to yield. In no time the flag of surrender was hoisted, the gates were thrown wide open, and Liu Du went to Liu Bei's camp to offer submission and present his seal of office. He was given back his former post, but his son was to leave for Jingzhou to serve in the army. The people of Lingling all rejoiced greatly at this peaceful change of rulers. Liu Bei entered the city, calming and reassuring the residents.

After rewarding his army he at once began to think of the next move and asked for an officer to volunteer to take Guiyang. Zhao Yun offered himself, and then Zhang Fei, too, vigorously proposed that he command the expedition. So they wrangled and competed.

Zhuge Liang said, "But Zi-long was the first to volunteer, so he is to go."

Still Zhang Fei insisted on going. They were then told to decide the dispute by drawing lots and again it was Zhao Yun who drew the winning lot.

Zhang Fei cried in anger, "I don't need any helpers—just give me 3,000 men and I will seize the city without difficulty."

“Me, too,” said Zhao Yun. “And if I fail I’m willing to accept the penalty.”

Zhuge Liang was pleased and a written commission was at once prepared. Three thousand veteran soldiers were chosen and Zhao Yun soon departed. Zhang Fei was still discontented but his brother Liu Bei reproached him and told him to withdraw.

With his 3,000 men Zhao Yun took the road to Guiyang. The prefect, Zhao Fan, soon heard of his approach and hastily summoned his officers for a counsel. Two of them, Chen Ying and Bao Long, offered to meet the invaders and turn them back.

Now these two officers used to be hunters in the hills of Guiyang. Chen Ying used a flying fork and Bao Long could draw a bow with such force that he had been known to shoot down two tigers. Considering themselves very strong, they said to the prefect, “We will lead the van if Liu Bei comes.”

Prefect Zhao replied, “I hear that Liu Bei is of the imperial family; Zhuge Liang is exceedingly resourceful; and Guan Yu and Zhang Fei are very powerful. And the commander of this force is Zhao Yun who, on one occasion, faced a million soldiers and never flinched. Our small force here cannot stand against such people. We will have to yield.”

“Let me go out to fight,” said Chen Ying. “If I cannot capture Zhao Yun then you can yield.”

The prefect could not dissuade him and finally gave his consent. Then Chen Ying, with 3,000 men, went out and soon

the two armies came within sight of each other. When he had drawn up his force in battle array Chen Ying took his flying fork and galloped to the front. Gripping his spear, Zhao Yun rode forth to meet him.

"My master is the brother of Liu Biao, to whom this land belonged. Now he is supporting his nephew Liu Qi to rule Jingzhou. He has sent me to soothe and pacify the people here. Why then do you oppose me?"

"We only take orders from Prime Minister Cao," replied Chen Ying. "Do you think we will surrender to your master?"

This reply put Zhao Yun in a rage. He raised his spear and rode directly at his opponent, who twirled his flying fork to engage him. The two horses met, but after four or five encounters Chen Ying, realizing that there was no hope of victory, turned to flee. Zhao Yun followed. Glancing back Chen Ying saw that Zhao Yun was coming near. He suddenly turned and flung the fork at Zhao Yun, who deftly caught it and threw it back. Chen Ying hastened to dodge away, but Zhao Yun soon fell upon him, dragged him out of the saddle, and threw him to the ground. Then he called up his soldiers to bind the prisoner and take him to the camp. All the men of the defeated army scattered and fled.

"How dare you combat me?" said Zhao Yun to the prisoner when they had returned to camp. "However, I am not going to put you to death. Go back and persuade your master to yield."

Chen Ying asked for pardon and, putting his hands over his head, fled like a frightened rat. When he returned he told the prefect what had happened. "I meant to yield, but you insisted

on fighting and this is what it has brought you to," he said reproachfully.

Then he took his seal of office and went out to Zhao Yun's camp to offer submission, accompanied by a small escort. Zhao Yun received him graciously, treated him with wine, and then accepted the seal of office. After the wine had gone round several times Zhao Fan, the prefect, said, "General, your surname is the same as mine, which means that five centuries ago we were one family. Moreover, we are from the same village. If you do not despise me, let us swear brotherhood. I should be very happy."

Zhao Yun was pleased and they compared their ages. They were born in the same year but Zhao Yun was the elder by four months, and so Zhao Fan made his bow as younger brother. The two men, having so many things in common, seemed to be destined to be as close as brothers.

At eventide the feast broke up and the prefect returned to his dwelling inside the city. The next day he invited Zhao Yun to enter the city, where, after he had assured the people of their safety, Zhao Yun went to a banquet at his sworn brother's official residence. When they had become mellow with wine the prefect invited Zhao Yun into an inner chamber, where wine was again served. Zhao Yun was a little intoxicated and suddenly his host asked a lady to come out and present a cup of wine to the guest. The lady, dressed in white, was exceptionally attractive. Indeed, her beauty was of the kind that could overthrow cities and ruin states.

"Who is she?" asked Zhao Yun.

“My sister-in-law, Lady Fan.”

Zhao Yun at once treated her with deference. When she had offered the cup the prefect told her to take a seat and join them in drinking, but Zhao Yun would not agree and the lady withdrew.

“Why did you trouble your sister-in-law to present wine to me, brother?” asked Zhao Yun.

“There is a reason,” said the prefect, smiling. “Please let me tell you. My brother died three years ago and left her a widow. I have often advised her to marry again, but she said she would only do so if her suitor could meet with three conditions: first, he must be famous for literary grace and martial arts; secondly, handsome and highly dignified; and thirdly, of the same surname as my brother’s. Now where in all the world is such a combination likely to be found? Yet here you are, brother, dignified, handsome and prepossessing, a man whose fame spreads across the four seas and of the desired surname. You exactly fulfill my sister-in-law’s requirements. If you don’t find her too ugly, I would like to present her to be your wife and I will provide a dowry. What do you think of such an alliance?”

But Zhao Yun rose in anger, shouting, “As I have just sworn brotherhood with you, isn’t your sister-in-law my sister-in-law? How could you think of bringing such confusion into the relationship.”

Shame suffused Zhao Fan’s face and he said, “I meant only kindness— why are you so very rude to me?”

So saying he looked at his attendants with murder in his eye. But Zhao Yun was already aware of his evil intention, he raised his fist and knocked the prefect down. Then he strode out, mounted his steed, and rode out of the city.

The prefect at once called in his two fighting men for counsel. Chen Ying said, “He has gone away in a rage, which means we will have to fight him.”

“But I fear we will lose,” said Zhao Fan.

“Let us pretend to be deserters,” suggested Bao Long, “and so get among his men. When you come to challenge him we will catch him by surprise.”

“We have to take some men with us,” said Chen Ying.

“Five hundred will do,” said Bao Long.

So that night the two men and their followers went to Zhao Yun’s camp to desert. Zhao Yun saw through the trick they were playing but he told the guards to bring them in.

They said, “Zhao Fan intended to tempt you with that fair lady. He wanted to make you drunk so that he might murder you and send your head to Cao Cao for a reward. Yes, he was as wicked as that. We saw you go away in anger and we thought that would mean trouble for us—so we have come to submit to you.”

Zhao Yun listened with simulated joy. He had wine served to the two men and urged them to drink so that they were soon quite overcome. Then he had both of them bound with cords.

When this was done, he called up their followers and questioned them about the truthfulness of their desertion and they confessed. Zhao Yun gave the soldiers food and wine and said, “Those who wanted to harm me are your officers and not you. If you do as I tell you, you will be well rewarded.”

The soldiers threw themselves to the ground and promised obedience. So the two officers were beheaded while their five hundred followers were made to lead the way and act as a screen for Zhao Yun’s one thousand men. The party set out that very night for the city of Guiyang. When they got there they called the guards to open the gate, saying that the two officers had slain Zhao Yun and had returned to speak with the prefect.

Those on the wall lighted torches and looked down at those outside the gate. Sure enough, they wore the uniforms of their own people. The prefect hastened out to meet them but was immediately seized and made prisoner. Then Zhao Yun entered the city and, after order was restored, dispatched a messenger to report the news to Liu Bei, who came to Guiyang at once with Zhuge Liang.

When they had taken their seats the prefect was brought in and placed at the foot of the steps. In response to Zhuge Liang’s questions he related the story of the proposed marriage.

Zhuge Liang said to Zhao Yun, “But this seems a fine thing—why did you refuse?”

"Zhao Fan and I had just sworn brotherhood and so marriage with his sister-in-law would incur universal criticism of myself. That is one reason. Secondly, to make a woman marry again would mean a great loss of virtue to her. And thirdly, I did not think I could give such great trust to someone who had just yielded so easily to accept a proposal of marriage. My lord, your position as a recent victor is still far from secured and could I risk the failure of your plans for the sake of a woman?"

"But now that the city has been seized, would you care to marry her?"

"There are plenty of women in the world. Should I fear that I will find no wife? For me, my only fear is whether I will cut a fine figure in the world."

"You are indeed most honorable," said Liu Bei.

Zhao Fan was released and given back his post and Zhao Yun was handsomely rewarded.

But Zhang Fei was angry and disappointed. "So Zi-long gets all the credit and I'm worth nothing," he cried. "Just give me 3,000 men and I will take Wuling and bring you its prefect."

This pleased Zhuge Liang, who said, "There is no reason why you shouldn't go, but you must fulfill one requirement."

> The advisor plans cleverly to achieve victory in battle;
>
> Generals compete keenly to gain renown in fighting.

What precondition Zhuge Liang had in mind will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

Guan Yu Releases Huang Zhong from a Sense of Righteousness

Sun Quan Fights a Great Battle with Zhang Liao

What Zhuge Liang required from Zhang Fei was a formal recognition of responsibility for success. He said, “When Zi-long went on his expedition he gave written guarantees that he would be successful, and you ought to do the same. Then you may have your men and start for Wuling.”

So Zhang Fei signed the required document and happily received the 3,000 soldiers he had demanded. He set out at once and traveled without rest till he reached Wuling.

When the Prefect of Wuling, Jin Xuan by name, heard that an expedition against him was afoot he assembled his officers and men, mustered his weapons and equipment, and was ready to move his army out of the city for battle.

One of his subordinates, Gong Zhi, said, “Liu Bei is recognized as an uncle of the Emperor. His kindness and righteousness are known to all. And his brother Zhang Fei is exceptionally bold. We have no hope of success in battle. Our best course is to give in.”

But his master replied angrily, “Do you want to play the traitor and help the rebels?”

He called in the guards and told them to put Gong Zhi to death. The other officers interceded for him, saying, “It means ill fortune to start an expedition by slaying one of your own men.”

So the prefect spared his life and ordered him to withdraw. Then he himself led the army out of the city. After marching twenty li, he met with Zhang Fei’s army.

Zhang Fei at once rode to the front and shouted at the prefect, his spear ready to thrust. The prefect turned to his officers and asked for a volunteer to go out and give battle, but no one responded, for they were all too afraid to venture forward.

So the prefect himself galloped out, flourishing his sword. Seeing him advance Zhang Fei roared in a voice of thunder. White with panic the poor prefect dared not fight but turned his steed and fled. Then Zhang Fei and his army followed in pursuit and smote the runaway prefect and his men, chasing them right to the city wall.

Here, the fugitives were greeted by a flight of arrows from their own walls. Greatly frightened, the prefect looked up to see what this meant and there was Gong Zhi, who had opposed him, standing on the wall.

“You brought defeat upon yourself because you opposed the will of Heaven,” cried Gong Zhi. “I have the people on my side. We are determined to yield to Liu Bei.”

Before he had finished speaking, an arrow shot the prefect in the face and he fell to the ground. Soon his own men cut off his head, which they at once presented to Zhang Fei. Gong Zhi then went out and made a formal submission. Zhang Fei ordered him to take the seal of office to Guiyang to Liu Bei, who was pleased to hear of his brother's success and appointed Gong Zhi the new prefect. Soon after Liu Bei came in person to the newly occupied city to soothe the people.

Later, in a letter to Guan Yu, he told him of the two victories. Guan Yu at once wrote back to say that the city of Changsha was yet to be taken and if he was not thought too incapable he would like to be appointed for the task. Liu Bei read the letter with great pleasure and immediately sent Zhang Fei to relieve Guan Yu of the defense of Jingzhou so that he could return and prepare for an expedition to Changsha. Guan Yu came and went in to see his elder brother and Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang said, "The other two have won their battles with 3,000 soldiers. Now the Prefect of Changsha is not worth mentioning, but he has a very strong officer, named Huang Zhong. He used to be in the service of Liu Biao and helped his nephew Liu Pan defend Changsha. After Liu Biao's death he joined the present prefect. Although he is nearly sixty he is a man to be feared and a warrior of indomitable valor. You ought to take a larger number of men with you when you go."

Guan Yu replied, "Why do you extol other people's merit, sir, and damp down our own spirit? I don't think the old soldier is worth any consideration and I don't need 3,000 men. I will only take my own five hundred swordsman and I will present the heads of both Huang Zhong and the prefect to you."

Liu Bei tried hard to dissuade Guan Yu from making such a rash decision, but Guan Yu would not listen. So in the end he set out with only the five hundred men under his command.

"He underestimates Huang Zhong's strength," said Zhuge Liang. "I am afraid there will be a mishap. You must go to support him, my lord."

Liu Bei took the advice and also set out toward Changsha with another force.

The prefect of Changsha was a man of short temper and would kill without mercy, so he was universally hated. When he heard of the approach of Guan Yu's troops he called in his veteran officer, Huang Zhong, to discuss the matter.

Huang Zhong said, "Do not be distressed, sir. With my sword and bow I will slay whoever dares to invade us."

Here it should be mentioned that Huang Zhong was very skillful in archery, and could bend a bow as weighty as two hundred catties and shoot with absolute accuracy.

At this moment another man spoke up: "It is not necessary for the old general to go out to battle. Just leave it to me and I will have this Guan Yu a prisoner in your hands."

The speaker was called Yang Ling. The prefect gladly accepted his offer and Yang Ling, leading a thousand men, quickly rode out of the city. About fifty li from the city they observed a great cloud of dust approaching and they knew that the invaders had come. Riding in front Yang Ling set his spear and hurled abuse at his enemy. Guan Yu made no reply

to the abuse but rode forward angrily, flourishing his weighty sword. A struggle between the two followed but in the third encounter Yang Ling was slain. Guan Yu's troops dashed forward and pursued the defeated force to the city wall.

When the prefect heard of this he was greatly alarmed and ordered the veteran Huang Zhong to go out, while he went up the city wall to watch the fight.

Huang Zhong took his sword and crossed the drawbridge at the head of five hundred cavalrymen. Guan Yu, seeing an old warrior riding out, knew it must be Huang Zhong. He told his men to spread out in a line. Holding his mighty sword Guan Yu asked, "Are you Huang Zhong?"

"Since you know my name, how come you dare to invade our land?" replied the old warrior.

"I have come expressly to get your head."

Then the combat began. They fought a hundred and more bouts but neither could subdue the other. At this point the prefect, fearful of possible misfortune to his veteran general, beat the gong to call back his men and the battle ceased. Huang Zhong withdrew into the city and Guan Yu camped some ten li away.

In his camp Guan Yu thought to himself, "That old general really lives up to his reputation. He has not betrayed a single flaw in a hundred bouts. Tomorrow I must use a feint (or a 'Parthian' maneuver) to overcome him."

The next day, after breakfast, Guan Yu came to the city wall and issued a challenge. The prefect seated himself on the city wall and again sent out Huang Zhong who, at the head of his hundreds of men, dashed across the drawbridge. The two warriors engaged and at the end of more than fifty bouts neither was nearer victory. On both sides soldiers cheered on lustily while drums beat furiously. Suddenly Guan Yu wheeled around his horse and fled. Huang Zhong followed. Just as he was to strike the unexpected blow, Guan Yu heard behind him a tremendous crash and, glancing back, he saw his pursuer lying flat on the ground, thrown down by his steed, which had stumbled. Guan Yu turned, raised his sword and cried fiercely, "I spare your life now. Quickly get another horse and come again to fight."

Huang Zhong hastily pulled his horse to its feet, leaped upon its back, and went into the city at full speed. The prefect was astonished and asked for an account of the incident.

"That horse has not been in battle for a long time," replied Huang Zhong. "So it stumbled."

"Why didn't you shoot him since your archery is so perfect?" asked the prefect.

"I will try that tomorrow," said Huang Zhong. "I will feign defeat and so lure him to pursue me to the drawbridge and then shoot him."

The prefect gave him a black horse that he himself usually rode. Huang Zhong thanked him and retired. But in his heart he could not forget Guan Yu's generous conduct. He thought to himself, "How noble Guan Yu is! Since he was so kind as

to spare my life, how can I bear to take his? But if I don't shoot, I will betray my duty as a soldier." This thought troubled him the whole night but he could not make up his mind. At daybreak he was told that Guan Yu was again challenging outside and he led his men out to meet him.

Now Guan Yu, having fought for two days without success, was rather impatient. That morning he mustered all his energy and went forth, determined to fight it out with his opponent. When they had got to the thirtieth bout Huang Zhong fled as if he was overcome. Guan Yu pursued.

Remembering Guan Yu's kindness the day before, Huang Zhong could not bear to harm him. Putting up his sword, he took his bow but twanged the string only. Guan Yu heard the sound of the string and dodged hastily, but seeing no arrow in the air, he continued his pursuit. Again Huang Zhong twanged the bowstring and again Guan Yu dodged, but still no arrow was fired. Thinking that Huang Zhong did not know how to shoot, Guan Yu pressed on with the pursuit.

As they neared the drawbridge, Huang Zhong stopped, fitted an arrow to his bow, and shot. Twang! and the arrow hit right at the tip of the plume on Guan Yu's helmet.

The soldiers shouted in alarm. Guan Yu, surprised, turned back for camp with the arrow still sticking in his helmet. Only then did he realize that Huang Zhong's skill in archery was equal to piercing a willow leaf at a hundred paces. With this also came the realization that Huang Zhong's shooting at his helmet plume was to show gratitude for his merciful act the day before. So he withdrew.

When Huang Zhong returned to see the prefect, he was at once seized. “I have committed no crime,” cried Huang Zhong.

“I have been watching you these last three days. How can you fool me? You did not exert yourself the day before, which proved you had some sinister intention. Yesterday, your horse stumbled yet he spared your life, which showed that you were in league with him. And today you twice twanged your bowstring without shooting, while the third time you only shot at his helmet. Dare you say there is no secret conspiracy in all this? If I do not put you to death you will assuredly bring harm to me.”

The prefect ordered him to be executed outside the city gate. When the other officers attempted to intercede for their colleague he silenced them by saying that anyone who pleaded for the condemned would be regarded as an accomplice.

The executioners hustled the old warrior out of the city but at the very moment when the sword was raised in the air and on the point of descending, an officer suddenly dashed in, cut down the executioner, and rescued Huang Zhong.

“Huang Zhong is the bulwark of our city,” he shouted. “To destroy him is to destroy the Changsha people. This prefect is cruel and ruthless. He shows no respect for wise scholars and is arrogant toward his officers. It is he who ought to be slain! Those of you who share my view, follow me!”

All eyes turned toward this bold speaker, who was of swarthy complexion and had eyes like bright stars. Some of them

knew him as Wei Yan, a native of Yiyang. He had tried to follow Liu Bei in Xiangyang but, unable to come up with him, had gone into the service of this prefect, who disliked his arrogant carriage and lack of polish and would not give him important positions. And so his talents were wasted in this place.

After the rescue of Huang Zhong, he called upon the people to join him in doing away with the prefect. Soon he had a following of several hundred people. Huang Zhong tried to stop them, but in vain. In a very short time Wei Yan had fought his way onto the wall and killed the prefect with one slash of his sword. Taking his victim's head, Wei Yan rode out of the city with his following to surrender to Guan Yu, who, overjoyed, entered the city to restore order.

When the people were pacified, Guan Yu sent his men to invite Huang Zhong to come and see him, but the old warrior declined, claiming to be indisposed.

Then Guan Yu sent the good news to his brother and to Zhuge Liang, asking them to come.

However, shortly after Guan Yu had left for Changsha, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang had followed him with reinforcements in case of need. While on the march, a black flag was furled in reverse and a crow flying from north to south croaked thrice as it passed.

"What omens do these portend?" asked Liu Bei.

While seated on his horse, Zhuge Liang performed a rapid calculation on his fingers of the meaning of these signs and

replied, “Changsha is taken and a great warrior obtained. We will know soon after noon.”

Sure enough, a soldier presently came galloping along with the welcome tidings of the capture of the city and the procurement of two warriors. “Everything is in order,” said the messenger. “They are only waiting for your arrival, sir.”

Liu Bei was delighted with the news and happily entered the city, where he was welcomed into the magistracy and told everything about Huang Zhong.

Liu Bei went in person to Huang Zhong’s house and invited him to enter his service, upon which the old warrior conceded and yielded to him formally. He then requested to be permitted to bury the remains of the late prefect in the east of the city.

Lofty as Heaven was the spirit of the warrior,

Who, even in his old age, defended the south;

Calmly had he approached death, with no thought of resentment,
But, bowing before the conqueror, he hung his head in shame.
Praise the sword, gleaming snow-white, and the glory of superhuman bravery,
Consider the mail-clad steed sniffing the wind and rejoicing in the battle,
That warrior’s name will stand high and its brightness be undiminished,

While the cold moon sheds her light on the waters of
Xiang and Tan.

Liu Bei was very generous toward the veteran warrior who had joined his banner. Then Guan Yu brought in Wei Yan to be introduced but at the sight of him Zhuge Liang suddenly ordered him to be taken away and put to death.

"He has done a good service and has committed no fault," exclaimed Liu Bei in surprise. "Why do you want to slay him?"

Zhuge Liang replied, "To enjoy the bounty of one's master yet slay him is most disloyal—to live on his land yet offer his territory to another is ungrateful. I see there is a bone of treachery at the back of his head, which means he will certainly turn again. Therefore it is well to put him to death now to prevent him from doing harm in the future."

"But to slay this man will frighten away all others who may wish to surrender," argued Liu Bei. "I pray you pardon him."

Zhuge Liang pointed his finger at Wei Yan and said, "I will spare your life now. Remember to be always faithful to your lord and never to conceive any thought of treason or I will have you beheaded."

Wei Yan pledged allegiance and then withdrew.

Having submitted with good grace, Huang Zhong recommended to his new master Liu Biao's nephew Liu Pan, then living in Youxian nearby. Liu Bei employed him in the administration of Changsha.

The four cities having been conquered, Liu Bei and his army returned to Jingzhou. From then on things went smoothly for him: money and supplies flowed in abundantly; able men from all sides flocked to his standard; and every strategic point was carefully guarded.

It is time to return to Zhou Yu. When he went to Caisang to nurse his wound he left Gan Ning to guard Baling and Ling Tong to defend Hanyang. The fleet was shared between these two places to be ready to move when required. The remainder of the force under the command of Cheng Pu went to Hefei, where Sun Quan had been wrestling with the northern men since the battle of the Red Cliff. He'd had a dozen or more big and small battles with his enemy, but neither side had gained a decisive victory. He dared not camp near the city, but entrenched himself about fifty li away.

When he heard of the approach of reinforcements he was very pleased and went in person to meet and welcome his men. Soon, guards came to announce Lu Su's arrival before the others and Sun Quan dismounted and stood by the roadside to greet him. As soon as he saw this, Lu Su slid out of the saddle in a hurry and made his obeisance. This unusually respectful attitude toward Lu Su was not lost on the other officers, who were greatly amazed. Sun Quan then asked Lu Su to remount and ride by his side. Presently he said secretly to Lu Su, "Just now I dismounted to greet you. Wasn't that enough recognition of your position?"

"No," replied Lu Su.

"Then what more can I do?"

“I want to see your authority and virtue spread over the four seas and embrace the nine provinces, fulfilling the great design of establishing your own empire. Then my name will be inscribed in the annals and I will indeed be accorded the fullest recognition.”

Sun Quan clapped his hands and laughed heartily. They went into the camp, where banquets were prepared to reward the newly arrived officers and men for their remarkable services at the great battle of the Red Cliff. In the meantime, the destruction of Hefei was also under discussion.

Just then guards came in to say that Zhang Liao had sent a letter of challenge. Sun Quan tore open the cover and read it. “How impudent that Zhang Liao is!” he cried in wrath. “He hears that Cheng Pu has arrived and deliberately sends this challenge. Tomorrow I will fight him with my original force, without the new arrivals.”

Orders were given that the army was to move out of camp at the fifth watch the next morning and advance toward Hefei. Halfway through their journey they were met by the northern army, and each side drew up in battle array. Sun Quan, with a helmet and breastplate of gold, rode to the front, supported by Song Qian and Jia Hua on each side, both armed with a halberd.

When the third roll of the drum ceased, the center of the northern army opened and out came three fully-armed warriors, with Zhang Liao in the middle, supported on each side by Li Dian and Yue Jin. Zhang Liao rode out and addressed his challenge directly to Sun Quan, who took his spear and was about to engage him when one of his officers,

Taishi Ci, galloped forth and raised his spear to thrust. Zhang Liao whirled up his sword to meet the newcomer and the two fought nearly a hundred bouts, but neither could overcome the other.

Then Li Dian said to Yue Jin, “That person with the golden helmet is Sun Quan—if we could but capture him the loss of our huge army would be amply avenged.”

At this Yue Jin dashed out all by himself, one rider and one sword, and swift as a flash of lightning, he cut in sideways and slashed at Sun Quan. The two officers beside Sun Quan hastened to shield their master with their halberds. The sword fell, snapping both halberds, and the two officers used their broken weapons to hammer away on the head of Yue Jin’s steed and forced him back.

One of the two officers, Song Qian, picked up a spear from a soldier and went in pursuit of Yue Jin, but Li Dian, on the opposite side, fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at his heart. And Song Qian fell as the bowstring twanged.

Hearing the fall of someone behind him, Taishi Ci gave up the fight with Zhang Liao and returned to his own line. At this Zhang Liao pressed on with a swift attack and the army of Wu, thrown into confusion, scattered and fled.

Zhang Liao, having spotted Sun Quan in the distance, urged his steed forward in hot pursuit and had nearly come up with him when Cheng Pu timely rushed in from one side, engaged Zhang Liao in battle, and saved his master. Then Zhang Liao withdrew his forces to Hefei.

Sun Quan was escorted back to his main camp, where his beaten soldiers gradually rejoined him. The death of Song Qian greatly pained him and he wept aloud.

But one of his faithful officials, named Zhang Hong, reproached him. "My lord, you rely too much upon your martial prowess and will go rashly into battle against a formidable enemy, which scares all of us here in the army. Now it is the duty of an officer, but not for you, to display valor on the battlefield, slaying opponents and seizing banners. I earnestly urge you to curb and repress such physical feats as befitting a strong warrior and contemplate ways of exercising princely virtues for forging your own empire. It is because you had rushed into battle that Song Qian perished at the hands of your enemy. Hereafter, you should regard as most important your personal safety."

"You are right—it is indeed my fault," said Sun Quan. "I will reform."

Soon after, Taishi Ci entered and said, "I have a man called Ge Ding who is the sworn brother of a groom in the army of Zhang Liao. This groom is deeply resentful because of some punishment he had suffered and is anxious for revenge. He has sent someone over to say that he will show a torch as a signal tonight when he has assassinated Zhang Liao in revenge for the death of Song Qian. I want you to give me some men to support them from the outside."

"Where is this Ge Ding?" asked Sun Quan.

"He has already mingled with the enemy and gone into the city. Let me have 5,000 men."

Zhuge Jin was opposed to this. “Zhang Liao is very shrewd and he might be prepared,” he said. “You shouldn’t go.”

But Taishi Ci insisted. Sun Quan, much grieved over the death of Song Qian, was also anxious for revenge and so the permission was given and the force gathered.

Now this Ge Ding, a fellow villager of Taishi Ci’s, had made his way into the city without being detected, found the groom, and discussed with him as to how they could slay Zhang Liao. Ge Ding also told him that Taishi Ci would come over that night to help them and asked him what they should do.

His sworn brother, the groom, said, “The stable here is far away from the central tent and it won’t be possible to approach there at night. I think it’s better for me to start a fire on the hay while you go to the front to raise a hue and cry. That’ll throw all into confusion and we’ll have a chance to kill Zhang Liao.”

“What an excellent plan!” applauded Ge Ding.

Now after the victory Zhang Liao returned to the city and rewarded his men but he issued orders that everyone was to sleep lightly with his armor on. His attendants said, “You have gained a great victory today and the enemy are far away. Why not take off your armor, general, and get some good rest?”

Zhang Liao replied, “That’s not the way of a commander. A victory is no reason for rejoicing, nor should a defeat cause grief. If the men of Wu suspect that we are unprepared and

attack, how are we going to repel them? We must be doubly careful tonight."

Scarcely had he said this than a fire started in the rear camp and cries of "rebellion" arose on all sides. Instantly, reports of the incident swarmed in. Zhang Liao went out and called together a dozen or so officers and guards to take up positions in the main passageway.

"The shouts are insistent," said the others. "Let's go and see what it means."

"A whole city can't be all traitors," he said. "It must be the work of a few rebels who are intentionally trying to frighten the soldiers. If I see anyone panicking I'll slay him first."

Soon after Li Dian dragged up Ge Ding and the groom. After forcing the truth out of them Zhang Liao had them beheaded. Then there arose a great noise of shouting and the rolling of drums outside the gate.

"That means the men of Wu have come to help those two," said Zhang Liao. "But we'll destroy them at their own game."

He told his men to light a fire and yell "Treachery! Rebellion!" At the same time the city gates were opened and the drawbridge let down.

When Taishi Ci saw the gates swing open he thought his scheme was working, so in full confidence he rode in ahead of the others. But at the entrance an explosion was suddenly heard and the enemy arrows came down on him like pelting rain. Then he knew he had fallen into a trap and turned to

leave, but he was already wounded in several places. And in the pursuit that followed more than half of his men were slain. As he drew near his own camp a rescue force came out to his aid and the northern soldiers withdrew.

Sun Quan was even more sad when he learned that his faithful warrior Taishi Ci was grievously wounded. Then Zhang Zhao proposed withdrawal to the south and Sun Quan consented. He collected his men together and sailed back to Nanxu, where they camped.

Meanwhile Taishi Ci was dying. When his lord sent Zhang Zhao and others to ask after him, he cried, "When a man is born into a turbulent world, he has to be a soldier and make wondrous services with his three-foot-long sword. Why must I die before I have attained my ambition?"

These were his last words. He was forty-one years of age at the time of his death.

A filial son and a loyal officer,

Such was Taishi Ci, in Donglai was he born,
Far distant frontiers rang with his exploits,
Riding or archery, all men he excelled,
His righteous deeds in Beihai were well remembered,
His true valor at Shenting was by all admired.
Dying, he spoke of his unfulfilled aspirations,
All through the ages men sigh for his doleful fate.

Sun Quan was overcome with sorrow when another of his officers died. He gave orders to bury his remains most

honorably at the foot of a hill and took his son into his own house to be brought up.

When Liu Bei heard of the series of misfortunes that had befallen Wu and of their retirement to Nanxu, he discussed the situation with Zhuge Liang. The advisor said, "I was studying the sky during the night and saw a star falling in the northwest. The imperial family is to suffer a loss."

He had scarcely said this when news arrived of the death of Liu Qi, son of Liu Biao.

Liu Bei at once began to wail bitterly. But his advisor said to him, "Life and death are beyond our control, so do not be too sad, my lord, for grief may injure your health. Rather consider what is necessary to be done. We need to send someone to assume control of Xiangyang and make arrangements for the funeral."

"Who can go?" asked Liu Bei.

"It must be Guan Yu."

So they sent him to guard the city of Xiangyang.

Liu Bei soon began to worry about his promise to Lu Su that he would surrender Jingzhou to Wu on the death of Liu Qi, but Zhuge Liang assured him that he knew what to say if an envoy should come. Two weeks later it was announced that Lu Su had come to offer his condolences.

With schemes ready in mind,

They waited for the envoy to arrive.

What reply Zhuge Liang would give will be disclosed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

Dowager Wu Meets Her Son-in-Law at a Temple

Liu Bei Takes a Worthy Consort

Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang went out of the city to welcome the envoy of Wu and saw him to the guesthouse. After the usual greetings, Lu Su said, “Hearing of the death of your nephew, my lord has prepared some gifts and sent me to offer them at the funeral. General Zhou Yu also sends his condolences to you both.”

Both rose to thank him for the courtesy. Then the mourning gifts were handed over and the guest was invited to a banquet at which he revealed the real object of his visit.

“You said, sir, that Jingzhou would be returned to us after the death of Liu Qi. Now that he is dead I hope you will keep your promise—I should be glad to know when the transfer can take place.”

“We will discuss that later—in the meantime let us go on with our wine,” said Liu Bei.

Reluctantly, Lu Su continued his drink but after a while he returned to the subject. Before Liu Bei spoke, Zhuge Liang, changing color, said to Lu Su, “How can you be so

unreasonable? Why do you have to wait till others point the truth out for you? From the very first days when the Han empire was founded, the great heritage of the Han house has devolved till today when, unfortunately, evil lords have risen one after another and strived to seize such portions of territory where they can. But with Heaven's will, unity will ultimately be restored. My lord is a member of the imperial house, a descendant of Emperor Jing. Now, as an uncle of the present Emperor, shouldn't he have a share of the empire? Moreover, Liu Biao was my lord's elder brother and there is certainly nothing wrong in inheriting a brother's estate. But what is your master? The son of a petty official on the banks of the Qiantang River, without having rendered any service to the throne. Just because he is powerful he now possesses a large tract of territory, including six districts and eighty-one towns, yet he is still insatiable in his greed and desire to swallow the territory of the Hans. This empire belongs to the Liu family. Isn't it strange that my lord, who is of that name, has no share in it whereas your master, whose surname is Sun, should claim it by force? Besides, at the battle of the Red Cliff my lord did good service while his officers risked their lives. Was it solely the strength of your men of Wu that won that fight? Had I not brought that southeast wind that meant so much for Zhou Yu, could he have achieved anything? If you had been conquered by Cao Cao, not only the two Qiao beauties would now be gracing the Bronze Bird Tower, but the families of your people would not have survived. Just now my lord did not reply because he was willing to believe that a scholar of your intelligence would understand the situation without a detailed explanation. Why, then, are you so slow to see the point?"

This long speech absolutely shut the guest's mouth and he could find no word to reply. After an interval he said, "What you say is not without sense but you are making things difficult for me."

"What is so difficult?" asked Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su replied, "When your lord was in serious straits at Dangyang it was I who conducted you across the river and introduced you to my lord; later, when Zhou Yu was going to attack Jingzhou, I again prevented him from doing so; and then when you proposed returning the place to us at Liu Qi's death, it was still I who pledged support for you. Now how can I go back and say you have broken your promise? Both my lord and Zhou Yu will hold me guilty. I would not mind death so much, but I fear that my master will be so wrathful that he may make war and you will have no peace in Jingzhou. You will look ridiculous in the eyes of the world."

Zhuge Liang replied, "Even Cao Cao, with his million men and the Emperor at his back, could not scare me—do you think I will fear such a youngster as your Zhou Yu? However, as it may cause you some embarrassment I will try to persuade my master to put it in writing that he is temporarily occupying Jingzhou as a base, and when he can obtain possession of some other place this will be returned to you. What do you think of this?"

"Wait till what other place is obtained?" asked Lu Su.

"Well, it is too early to think of attacking the north, but Liu Zhang in West Chuan is weak and my master will attack him.

If he gets that western province then this place will be handed over to you."

Lu Su had no alternative but to accept the offer. Liu Bei wrote down the pledge himself and signed his name. Zhuge Liang, as guarantor, also signed the document.

"Since I belong to one party I can hardly be a proper guarantor," said Zhuge Liang to Lu Su. "I will trouble you to sign, too. The document will look better when you show it to your master."

Lu Su agreed. "I know that your master is perfectly honorable and will not fail me."

And so he signed. Then, taking the document, he departed. He was escorted away with every mark of great respect, both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang accompanying him to his boat. There, Zhuge Liang made a last exhortation to Lu Su. "When you see your master, explain the situation fully to him so that he will not do anything rash. If he rejects our document we may get angry and we will take all his territory. The important thing now is for our two sides to live in harmony and not give Cao Cao an opportunity to laugh at us."

Lu Su went down to his ship. He first went to Caisang to see Zhou Yu, who asked, "Well, how did you fare with your demand for Jingzhou?"

"I have obtained a written pledge," said Lu Su, giving the document to Zhou Yu to read.

“You have been fooled by Zhuge Liang,” said Zhou Yu, stamping his foot in distress. “In name it may be temporary occupation but in fact it is humbug. They say the place is to be returned when they get the western province. Who knows when that will be? If they don’t get the place in ten years, does it mean Jingzhou won’t be returned to us in ten years? What’s the use of such a document as this? And you are a guarantor of its execution! If they don’t give us the city, you’ll get into trouble. Suppose our lord blames you for it, what then?”

Lu Su was dumbfounded. Then he said, “I think Liu Bei will be true to me.”

“You, my friend, are honest and sincere but Liu Bei is an unscrupulous adventurer and Zhuge Liang, a cunning schemer. They and you are utterly different.”

“What then is to be done?” cried Lu Su, crestfallen.

“You’re my dear friend and your kindness in generously offering your store of grain to relieve my difficulty is still fresh in my memory. Of course I’ll save you. Don’t be anxious, but wait a few days until my spies come back with news of what is happening there—then we can decide upon a plan.”

Lu Su passed some very uneasy days. Then the spies came back saying that a funeral was being prepared in Jingzhou, while outside the city they were building a new tomb for Lady Gan, wife of Liu Bei. All the soldiers were in mourning.

When Zhou Yu knew who was dead, he said to his friend, “My plan is made. You will see Liu Bei stand to be captured and we will get Jingzhou as easily as turning a hand.”

“What is your plan?” asked Lu Su.

“Liu Bei will want to marry again now that his wife is dead. Our lord has a sister who is a veritable amazon. Her female guards number many hundreds, all armed with weapons of war, and her chamber is arrayed with all kinds of weapons. I will write to our lord asking him to send an intermediary to Jingzhou to propose a marriage between her and Liu Bei so that we can entice him to come here for the wedding. But instead of marrying, he will find himself a prisoner, and then we will demand Jingzhou as ransom. When they have handed over the city I will have some other plan ready. Nothing will fall on your head.”

Lu Su bowed to him in gratitude. Then Zhou Yu wrote a letter to his master and chose a swift boat to take Lu Su to see Sun Quan.

When he saw his master, Lu Su first told him about Liu Bei’s desire to retain Jingzhou and then presented him the document.

“What is the use of such nonsense as this?” said Sun Quan angrily, after he’d read it. “How could you be so muddle-headed?”

“Here is a letter from General Zhou and he says that if you will employ his scheme you can recover Jingzhou,” replied Lu Su.

Having read that letter, Sun Quan was pleased and began to consider who would be the best man to send to propose the marriage. Suddenly he cried, “I have it—Lu Fan is the man to send.”

He summoned Lu Fan and said to him, “I have just heard that Liu Bei has lost his wife. I have a sister whom I should like to marry to him and so make a bond of union between our two sides. Thus we should be united against Cao Cao and in support of the House of Han. You are the most suitable man to be the intermediary and I hope you will go to Jingzhou without delay to attend to this.”

Under these orders Lu Fan at once began to prepare for the voyage and soon set out.

Liu Bei was greatly distressed at the death of Lady Gan, fretting day and night. One day he was talking with his advisor when the arrival of Lu Fan, an envoy from Wu, was announced.

“One of Zhou Yu’s devices,” said the advisor smiling. “He must have come for this city. I will stand behind the screen and listen. But you, my lord, just agree to whatever he proposes and send him to the guesthouse. We can arrange what is to be done later.”

So the envoy was invited in. After the greetings the guest was served tea. Then Liu Bei asked, “Your coming must have some special purpose, sir. What can I do for you?”

“I have heard that you, sir, have just been bereaved of your consort. I happen to know of an advantageous match so I venture to propose it to you. Are you disposed to listen?”

“To lose one’s wife in middle age is truly a great misfortune,” said Liu Bei. “But her body is hardly cold, how can I bear to consider another marriage?”

Lu Fan said, “A man without a wife is like a house without a beam. At your age one should not live an incomplete life. I have come on behalf of my lord, who has a sister, beautiful as well as accomplished and well-fitted to be a mate for you. Should our two sides form an alliance of marriage, then that ruffian Cao Cao would never dare so much as look this way. Such a union would be to the benefit of both our houses and to the state. I hope, sir, that you will have no doubt about the proposal. However, since the girl’s mother is dotingly fond of her, she does not wish her to go far away, and so I must ask you to come into our country for the wedding.”

“Does your lord know of your coming?”

“How dare I come without his consent?”

“I am nearly fifty and grizzled,” said Liu Bei. “But your lord’s sister is now in the flower of her youth. I do not think I can be the right companion for her.”

“Although she is a woman yet in mind she surpasses many men, and she has said she will never marry anyone who is unknown to fame. Now you, sir, are renowned throughout the four seas. A marriage with you would be a case of ‘the

virtuous maiden marrying the born hero'. Of what consequence is the difference in age?"

"Please stay here awhile and I will give you a reply tomorrow," said Liu Bei.

So that day the envoy was entertained at a banquet and then conducted to the guesthouse to rest. That night Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang discussed their plans.

"I knew what he had come about," said the advisor. "Just now I consulted the oracle and obtained an excellent forecast. Therefore you can accept the proposal and send someone to Wu with Lu Fan to arrange the details. When the engagement has been ratified we will choose a day and you can go to Wu for the wedding."

"How can I enter enemy territory?" objected Liu Bei. "Zhou Yu is plotting to slay me."

"Let Zhou Yu employ all his ruses—do you think he can get beyond me? I only have to use some little schemes and none of his calculations will work. Then Sun Quan's sister will be yours and there will be no danger for Jingzhou."

Still Liu Bei hesitated. However, the advisor acted for him and sent an envoy to Wu to arrange the marriage. With definite instructions in mind the envoy left with Lu Fan to see the lord of Wu.

At the interview Sun Quan said, "I would like your master to come here for the wedding with my sister. He will come to no harm."

The envoy took his leave and returned to Jingzhou, where he told Liu Bei that Sun Quan was waiting for him to complete the marriage.

However, Liu Bei was afraid and would not go.

Zhuge Liang said, "I have prepared three plans, but they need Zhao Yun to carry them out."

Then he summoned Zhao Yun and whispered in his ear, "I want you to go with our lord to Wu. Here are three small silken bags in which are three excellent schemes. Take these with you and act as they direct."

Zhao Yun hid the silken bags inside his undergarments for safekeeping.

Zhuge Liang next sent people to deliver the wedding gifts to Wu, and when these had been received all preparations for the wedding were complete.

It was then the early winter of the fourteenth year of Jian An (A.D. 209). Ten fast ships were prepared and Liu Bei left Jingzhou, accompanied by Zhao Yun, Sun Qian, and an escort of five hundred soldiers to sail down the river to Nanxu. Zhuge Liang remained behind to guard and rule the city.

But Liu Bei was far from feeling comfortable. Presently they reached the shore and when the ships were anchored, Zhao Yun opened the first of the silken bags Zhuge Liang gave him and at once began to act accordingly. He gave each of the five hundred soldiers his instructions as to what to do, and they dispersed.

Next, he told Liu Bei to pay a visit to Lord Qiao, father of the two famous beauties and father-in-law of Sun Ce and Zhou Yu. He resided in Nanxu and so to his house, "leading sheep and bearing wine jars," went Liu Bei. Having made his obeisance he told the old man about the forthcoming marriage and that Lu Fan had acted as the intermediary.

In the meantime, Liu Bei's five hundred soldiers, all in gala dress, were scattered all over the town buying all sorts of things and spreading the news of the wedding of their master with the daughter of the house of Wu. In no time the marriage became the talk of the whole town.

When Sun Quan heard of Liu Bei's arrival, he sent Lu Fan to wait upon him and take him to the guesthouse. Meanwhile, Lord Qiao went to see Sun Quan's mother to congratulate her on the happy event.

"What happy event?" asked the Dowager in surprise.

"The betrothal of your beloved daughter to Liu Bei. And he has arrived too, so why do you try to withhold the news from me?"

"But I don't know anything about it," said the Dowager, greatly shocked.

She at once summoned her son but before he came she sent her servants out into the town to find out what was afoot. They quickly returned to confirm the news, saying that the bridegroom was staying at the guest-house and that he had come with a large escort and the men were buying food and fruit, all in readiness for the wedding feasting. They also told

her the names of the intermediaries on both sides, and said they were in the guesthouse, too.

The old lady was terribly upset. Presently Sun Quan arrived and was surprised to find his mother beating her breast and weeping bitterly.

“What has disturbed you, mother?” he asked.

“What you have just done,” she replied. “You have treated me as a non-entity. Do you remember what my elder sister told you before she died?”

Astonished, Sun Quan asked, “Please speak out plainly, mother—what is this great sorrow?”

“When a son is grown he takes a wife, and when a girl is old enough she is married to a husband. And that is right and proper. But I am your mother and you ought to have told me that your sister was to become the wife of Liu Bei. Why did you keep me in the dark? Surely she is my daughter.”

“Where does this story come from?” said Sun Quan, really alarmed.

“Do you pretend you do not know? There is not a soul in the city that does not know! But you have succeeded in keeping me in the dark.”

“I heard it several days ago,” said Lord Qiao. “And I came just now to offer my congratulations.”

“There is no such thing,” explained Sun Quan. “It is just one of the ruses of Zhou Yu to seize Jingzhou. He has used this trick to inveigle Liu Bei here and hold him captive till Jingzhou is restored to us. And if the city is not given back, Liu Bei will be put to death. That is only a plot. There is no real marriage.”

But his mother was in a rage and vented her wrath in abusing Zhou Yu. “As commander of our eighty-one towns he cannot find any good means to recover Jingzhou except making use of my child as a decoy. A fine scheme indeed! He is ready to spoil the whole of my child’s life and condemn her to perpetual widowhood simply because he wants to use the ‘fair damsel ruse’ to slay a man! Who will ever consider marriage with her after this?”

Here Lord Qiao also cut in, “By this means you may indeed recover Jingzhou but you will be a shameful laughingstock to all the world. How can you do such a thing?”

Sun Quan had nothing to say—he hung his head and listened to his mother abusing his general.

Lord Qiao tried to soothe her. “After all, Liu Bei is a member of the reigning family. Better now to accept him as a son-in-law and cover up the scandal.”

“But their ages do not match,” interposed Sun Quan.

“Liu Bei is a very famous man,” said Lord Qiao. “There will be nothing disgraceful for your sister to have such a husband.”

“I have never seen him,” said the Dowager. “Arrange for him to meet me tomorrow at the Sweet Dew Temple so that I can have a good look at him. If he displeases me, you may proceed with your plan for him. But if I am satisfied with him then I will simply let the girl marry him.”

Now Sun Quan was above all things a filial son and at once agreed to what his mother said. He went out, called in Lu Fan and told him to arrange a banquet for the morrow at the temple so that his mother might see Liu Bei.

“Why not order Jia Hua to station three hundred men in the wings of the temple?” suggested Lu Fan. “If she is not pleased we can call them out and fall upon him.”

Accordingly guards were posted inside the temple, ready to act if the old lady’s attitude was unfavorable.

When Lord Qiao returned to his own house, he sent someone to tell Liu Bei of the meeting the next day and to advise him to take special precaution.

Liu Bei discussed the matter with Zhao Yun and Sun Qian. Zhao Yun said, “The meeting tomorrow bodes ill. I will take the soldiers out to protect you.”

The next day the Dowager and Lord Qiao came first to the Temple of Sweet Dew and took their seats, followed by Sun Quan and his strategists. When all were assembled, Lu Fan was sent to the guesthouse to request Liu Bei to come. He obeyed the summons, but as a precaution he put on a light coat of mail under his brocaded robe. His attendants all carried their swords upon their backs and followed close. He

mounted his steed and the cavalcade set out for the temple. Zhao Yun, fully mailed, escorted him with the five hundred soldiers. At the door of the temple Liu Bei was met by Sun Quan, upon whom his impressive demeanor was not lost. After they had exchanged salutations, Sun Quan led Liu Bei before his mother.

"Just the son-in-law for me!" cried the Dowager, delighted with the appearance of Liu Bei.

"He has the very look and air of an emperor," remarked Lord Qiao. "What is more, his fine reputation has spread over the whole country. I must congratulate you for getting such a noble son-in-law."

Liu Bei bowed his thanks. Soon after, they all took their seats at the banquet tables in the temple and a feast began. Zhao Yun presently entered and took his place beside Liu Bei.

"Who is he?" asked the Dowager.

"This is Zhao Yun of Changshan."

"Then he must be the hero of the Long Slope at Dangyang, who saved the little A-dou."

"Yes, he is," replied Liu Bei.

"A fine warrior!" she said and had wine brought to him to drink.

Zhao Yun said to his master, "Just now I went down the corridor and saw a lot of armed guards hidden away in the

purlieus of the temple, which can only mean evil. You should tell the Dowager."

So Liu Bei knelt at the feet of the Dowager and, weeping, said, "If you intend to take my life, just slay me here."

"Why do you say this?" she asked.

"Because there are assassins hidden in the wings of the temple—what are they there for, if not to kill me?"

The Dowager wrathfully turned on Sun Quan. "As my son-in-law, Liu Bei is just like my own son. Why do you place assassins there?"

Sun Quan denied any knowledge of this and she sent for Lu Fan, who put the blame on Jia Hua. The Dowager summoned the officer and upbraided him severely. Jia Hua had nothing to say and she ordered him to be executed. At this point Liu Bei interceded, saying that it would not be auspicious for the marriage and would also make it hard for him to stay long at her side.

Lord Qiao also pleaded for the poor officer and finally she conceded and ordered him out. His men all ran away like frightened rats.

By and by, strolling out of the banquet room into the temple grounds, Liu Bei came to a boulder. Drawing his sword, he looked up to Heaven and prayed, "If I am to return to Jingzhou and achieve my ambition to become a ruler, then may I cleave this boulder asunder with my sword, but if I am

to meet my doom in this place then may the sword fail to split this stone."

Raising his sword he struck the boulder. As the sword fell, sparks flew in all directions and the boulder split in two.

From behind Sun Quan witnessed this and asked, "Why do you hate that stone so much?"

Liu Bei replied, "I am nearly fifty and have so far failed to rid the state of evil. I often grieve at my failure. Now I have been accepted by the Dowager as her son-in-law, which is indeed a great opportunity in my life. So I implored Heaven to show me a portent that if I could cut the boulder in two, then I would be able to destroy Cao Cao and restore Han. You saw what happened."

"That is only to fool me," thought Sun Quan. Drawing his own sword he said, "And let me also ask Heaven for a sign that if I am to destroy Cao Cao, I may also cut this rock."

But in his heart he secretly prayed, "If I am to recover Jingzhou and extend my borders, may the stone be cut in two."

He hit the boulder with his sword and it also split in two. And to this day, the "Boulder of Hate" with the cross cuts is still preserved.

A visitor who saw this relic wrote a poem:

The shining blades fell and the rock was shorn through,
The metal rang clear and the sparks widely flew.

Thus fate then declared for the dynasties two
And there began the tripartite rule.

Both put away their swords and returned hand-in-hand to the banquet hall. After some more courses Sun Qian gave his master a warning look and Liu Bei rose to take leave, saying that he'd had too much to drink. Sun Quan escorted him out of the temple. As they stood by the gate, enjoying the rolling hills and the rippling waves before their eyes, Liu Bei exclaimed, "This is really the finest landscape in the world!"

These words are recorded on a tablet in the Sweet Dew Temple and a poem was written about this:

After the rain the water and hills look serene,

And the black clouds roll away,
And this is the place of joy and mirth
Never can sorrow stay.

Here two heroes of ages past
Decided their parts to play,
The rocks flung back wind and wave
Then, as they do today

Yet as they stood entranced by the beautiful scene, along the vast river the wind whipped up the waves into snowy foam and lifted them high toward the sky. And in the midst of the

waves appeared a tiny leaf of a boat sailing over the waves as if all was perfect calm.

“The southern people are sailors and the northern men riders; it is quite true,” sighed Liu Bei.

Sun Quan, hearing this remark, took it as contempt of his horseman-ship. Bidding his servants lead up his steed he leaped into the saddle and set off, at full gallop, down the hill. Then wheeling, he came up again at the same speed.

“So the southerners cannot ride, eh?” he said laughing.

Not to be outdone, Liu Bei lifted the skirts of his robe, jumped upon his horse and repeated the feat.

The two steeds stood side by side on the slope, their riders flourishing their whips and laughing.

From then on that hillside was known as the “Slope where the Horses Stood” and a poem was also written about it.

Their galloping steeds were of noble breed,

And both of spirit high,
And the riders twain from the hill crest gazed
At the river rolling by
One of them mastered the far off west,
One ruled by the eastern sea;

And the name of the hill to this very day
Brings back to mind their feat.

When they rode side by side into Nanxu they were met with loud cheering from the people. Liu Bei made his way to the guesthouse and there sought advice from Sun Qian as to the date of the wedding. Sun Qian advised him to fix the date as early as possible, so that no further complications could arise. So the next day Liu Bei went to see Lord Qiao and told him in plain words that it was clear many people in that place meant harm to him and he feared he could not stay long.

"Do not be anxious," said Lord Qiao. "I will tell the Dowager to protect you."

Soon Lord Qiao went to tell the Dowager of Liu Bei's worries and his eagerness to return home. She was very angry when she heard the reason for Liu Bei's desire to leave.

"Who dares to harm my son-in-law?" she cried.

She at once asked him to move into the study of the palace as a precaution until a day would be chosen for the wedding. This arrangement, however, made it impossible for his soldiers to keep guard at his side.

So Liu Bei went to see her again and said, "It would be inconvenient for Zhao Yun to be left outside. The soldiers might get unruly."

She then told him to bring all his men into the palace so that nothing would go amiss. Liu Bei secretly rejoiced in his heart.

Several days later, huge banquets were given to celebrate the wedding of Liu Bei and his bride, Lady Sun. Once it had

grown late and the guests had departed, the bridegroom was conducted by two lines of red candles to the nuptial chamber.

To his utmost shock Liu Bei found the chamber furnished with spears and swords, while on two sides stood waiting-maids with swords girded to their waists.

Walls hung with spears the bridegroom saw,

And armed waiting-maids;

His heart fell back on all its fears
Of well-laid ambuscades.

What this meant will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Liu Bei Cleverly Persuades His Bride to Leave Wu

Zhuge Liang Provokes Zhou Yu to Anger a Second Time

The bridegroom turned pale with fright—the bridal chamber was lined with weapons of war and the waiting-maids armed! But the housekeeper said, "Do not be frightened, Your Lordship. My lady has always had a taste for martial arts and often amused herself by watching her maids fencing. That is all."

"Not the sort of thing a lady should ever look at," said Liu Bei. "It makes me feel cold and you may have them removed for a time."

The housekeeper went to her mistress and said, "The weapons in your chamber displease His Lordship—may we remove them?"

Lady Sun laughed and said, "He's afraid of a few weapons after half a lifetime spent in fighting!"

But she ordered their removal and told the maids to take off their swords while at work. And the night passed happily for the newly weds.

The next day Liu Bei distributed gifts among the maids to win their hearts and sent Sun Qian back to Jingzhou with news of the wedding. From then on he gave himself up to feasting and enjoyment. The Dowager liked him more every day.

The result of the plot to destroy Liu Bei was thus very different from the originator's intention. Sun Quan sent news of this to Zhou Yu and asked him for further advice, saying that due to his mother's insistence his sister was married to Liu Bei, so turning a fantasy into reality.

The news deeply troubled Zhou Yu and he could not concentrate on anything else until he finally thought out another scheme, which he put down in a letter and sent to his master. Here is the outline of the letter:

"Contrary to our expectations, my plan has taken a wrong course. However, since the make-believe ended in reality our future plans must evolve from this new situation. To his own daring ambition Liu Bei is aided by such mighty warriors as Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun, as well as the strategist Zhuge Liang. He is not the man to remain long in a lowly position. I can think of no better plan than to keep him in Wu, a prisoner of self-indulgence. Therefore build for him a fine palace to blunt the edge of his aspirations and surround him with sensuous luxury so as to alienate him from the affection of his brothers and disrupt his friendship with his strategist. When this result has been attained, we can smite him and so end a great matter. If we let him go free this time I fear the dragon is no beast to be kept in a pond, but will ultimately fly to the skies. I pray, sir, you will consider this most carefully."

The letter was shown to Zhang Zhao who said, “I agree with him completely. Liu Bei began life in a humble position and for years has been a vagrant. He has never tasted the delights of wealth. Give him the means of luxury, a beautiful dwelling, fair women, gold and silk, and as he enjoys them thoughts of Zhuge Liang and his brothers will fade away and they, on their side, will be filled with resentment. Thus we can lay our plans for recovering Jingzhou. I recommend that you quickly put into place the actions as suggested by Zhou Yu.”

Sun Quan then set about redecorating the eastern wing of the palace, laying out the grounds and filling the rooms with beautiful furniture for his sister and her husband. He also sent them scores of fair maids who could sing and dance, and every kind of fancy ornaments of gold and silver, as well as brocade and silk stuffs. And his mother was delighted at his kindness to her son-in-law.

Indeed, Liu Bei was soon so immersed in sensuous pleasure that he gave no thought to returning to Jingzhou. Zhao Yun and the soldiers under him led an idle life in the front portion of the residence, and they tried to kill time by practicing archery and horse racing outside the city. And thus days passed quickly and it was nearly the end of the year.

Suddenly Zhao Yun remembered the advisor’s orders and the three silk bags with the plans in them: to open the first one on arrival, the second one at year’s end, and the third one in an emergency, when there appeared no way out. Inside the bags were wonderful plans to guarantee the safe return of his lord. He thought to himself, “Our lord has indulged himself so much in pleasure that I can hardly see him. The year is

drawing to a close. Why don't I open the second bag and see what I can do?" So he opened the bag and discovered the wonderful scheme therein.

Acting accordingly, Zhao Yun went inside and asked to see his master. The maid in attendance went within and said, "Zhao Yun has some important matter to report to the master."

Liu Bei called him in and asked what the business was. Zhao Yun assumed an appearance of great distress and asked, "My lord, you are secluded in the beautiful chamber—have you quite forgotten Jingzhou?"

"But what is the matter that you seem so disturbed?" asked Liu Bei.

"This morning Zhuge Liang sent a messenger to say that Cao Cao was trying to avenge his last defeat and was leading half a million men to attack Jingzhou. The city is in great danger and he wishes you to return immediately."

"I must speak to my wife," said Liu Bei.

"If you consult her she will be unwilling to let you leave. It would be better to say nothing but to start this evening. Delay may cause great damage."

"Leave me alone for the time being," said Liu Bei. "I know what to do."

Zhao Yun deliberately pressed him several times with the need to return before going away.

Liu Bei went in to see his wife, weeping silently. Seeing his tears she asked, “Why are you so upset?”

Liu Bei replied, “I have been driven hither and thither all my life. I was never able to do my duty to my parents when they were alive nor have I been able to offer sacrifices to my ancestors. I have been most unfilial. The new year is at hand and its approach disquiets me greatly.”

“Don’t try to deceive me,” said the lady. “I heard and I know all. Just now, Zhao Yun came to tell you Jingzhou was threatened and you wish to return home. That is why you put forward this excuse.”

Then Liu Bei fell on his knees and said, “Since you know already I dare not withhold the truth from you. If I don’t go, and if Jingzhou is lost, I’ll be an object of ridicule to everyone. If I go, I can’t bear to leave you. So I’m grieved.”

She replied, “I’m your wife and wherever you go it’s my duty to follow.”

“Although you think so, your mother and brother will never allow you to leave. If you’d only have pity on me, let me go for a time.” And again his tears fell freely.

“Don’t be so sad,” she said. “I’ll implore my mother to let us go and she’ll surely agree.”

“Even though the Dowager permits I’m sure your brother will object.”

Lady Sun said nothing for a long time while she weighed the matter thoroughly in mind. Finally she spoke: "On New Year's Day you and I will go and pay our respects to my mother. Then we'll give an excuse of offering sacrifices to ancestors on the riverbank and leave from there without their knowledge. Will that suit you?"

Liu Bei knelt at her feet and expressed his gratitude. "If you can do that," he said. "I will never forget it, dead or alive. But this must be kept strictly as a secret."

This having been decided, Zhao Yun received secret orders to lead his men out of the city on New Year's Day and wait on the high road for his master and mistress, who would leave together with him.

Sun Quan held a grand celebration on New Year's Day of the fifteenth year of Jian An (A.D. 210). All the military officers and civil advisors were assembled in the main hall. Liu Bei and his bride went in to pay obeisance to the Dowager. Then Lady Sun said, "Mother, my husband has been thinking of his parents and ancestors, who were buried in the north, and grieves day and night that he cannot perform his filial duty. Today we wish to go to the riverside and offer sacrifices toward the north. I've come to tell you this, mother, and hope you'll allow us to go."

"A very filial proceeding," said the Dowager. "I should not think of stopping you. Although you have never known your husband's parents yet you should go with him to offer sacrifices as it's proper for a wife to do."

Both thanked the Dowager and went out, rejoicing at having so far hoodwinked Sun Quan. Lady Sun got into her carriage, taking only a few valuable things and clothing with her, while Liu Bei followed with a small escort of riders. They went out of the city and met Zhao Yun at the pre-arranged place. With the five hundred soldiers guarding the front and rear they left the precincts of the city, traveling as quickly as they could.

That day, at the new year banquet, Sun Quan drank freely so that he had to be helped to his chamber, and then the officials all left. By the time the escape of the fugitives became known it was already dark, and when the officials tried to tell Sun Quan they could not rouse him. He slept heavily until the fifth watch.

It was the next morning that Sun Quan heard of the escape and he hastened to seek advice from his counselors. Zhang Zhao said, "Liu Bei has got away today and trouble will surely come of it. You must pursue them without loss of time."

So Chen Wu and Pan Zhang, with five hundred veterans, were sent out with orders to chase at full speed both by day and by night and bring back the fugitives.

They left. Sun Quan's fury burned hot against Liu Bei. In his wrath he seized his jade inkstone and smashed it to pieces.

Cheng Pu, the deputy commander of his army, said: "My lord, your wrath is in vain for I do not think those two will catch the runaways."

"Will they dare to disobey my order?" said Sun Quan.

“Our young lady has always delighted in martial arts and is very fierce and determined. All the officers fear her. Now she has gone with her husband of her own free will and those sent in pursuit will not dare to lay hands on Liu Bei in her presence.”

Sun Quan’s wrath burned the more fiercely at these words. He drew the sword girded at his side and summoned Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai, saying, “You two take this sword and bring back the heads of my sister and Liu Bei. And if you do not I will put you to death.”

With this order they set out in pursuit, leading a force double that of their predecessors. Meanwhile, Liu Bei and his wife were pressing forward at the fastest speed. When night fell they rested for a time by the roadside, but not for long. Just as they reached the confines of Caisang, they noticed a great cloud of dust behind and soldiers came to report that the pursuers were closing.

Liu Bei asked Zhao Yun anxiously, “What is to be done? Our pursuers are here.”

“My lord, you go on in front and I will check the pursuit.”

However, as they rounded the foot of a hill they saw another troop blocking their road in front. Two officers were there and they bellowed, “Liu Bei, dismount and yield yourself captive. We are here by order of General Zhou and you have kept us waiting long.”

Now, it had occurred to Zhou Yu that Liu Bei would try to flee, and so he had sent Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, with 3,000

soldiers, to intercept him at this critical place. They had made a camp there and kept a lookout on the hilltops, for Zhou Yu had calculated that Liu Bei would certainly take that route if he was going by land. So when Liu Bei and his cavalcade appeared they all buckled on their arms and barred the way.

Greatly alarmed, Liu Bei rode back to consult Zhao Yun, to whom he said, "We are caught in between two forces. There is no escape. What can we do?"

"Do not be alarmed, my lord. Our great strategist gave me three wonderful plans enclosed in three silk bags. Two have been used and have answered admirably. There is yet the third one and my orders are to open the bag in such a plight as this. I think it is time to open it."

So he opened the small silk bag and handed it to Liu Bei. As soon as Liu Bei had read the contents he hastened to Lady Sun's carriage and, weeping, said to her, "There is something I must confide in you now."

"What have you to say to me?" she asked. "Tell me the whole truth."

"Your brother and Zhou Yu formerly plotted together for you to marry me, not for your sake, but to get me under their power so that they might seize Jingzhou. They were intent on murdering me and you were the bait with which to hook me. Careless of consequences I came, for I knew that the spirit of a man dwelt in your bosom and you would pity me. Yesterday I heard that harm was intended to me and so I made the excuse of Jingzhou being in danger in order to escape. Happily for me, you have remained true and come with me.

But now your brother is pursuing us and Zhou Yu's men are in front. Only you, my wife, can extricate us from this danger. And if you refuse, then slay me where I stand so that I may thus show my gratitude for your kindness."

Lady Sun grew angry and said, "Since my brother doesn't regard me as his sister, how will I ever want to see him again? I'll certainly extricate us from this danger."

So she bade her people push the carriage to the front. She rolled up the blind and called out, "Xu Sheng, Ding Feng, are you trying to rebel then?"

The two officers slid out of their saddles, dropped their arms and stood meekly in front of the carriage.

"We are no rebels," they said. "We have General Zhou's orders to camp here and await Liu Bei."

"How dare he, that rebel!" she cried in wrath. "We of the land of Wu have never ill treated him! Liu Bei, uncle of the Emperor, is my husband and I have already told my mother and my brother of our journey to Jingzhou, but you two lead an army here at the foot of this hill, preventing our passage. Do you intend to plunder us of our valuables?"

The two officers meekly denied the charge and said, "Do not be angry, madam. This is no plan of ours—we are but obeying our commander's orders."

"So you fear Zhou Yu and not me!" she cried scornfully. "Do you think he can slay you while I cannot?"

She broke into a torrent of abuse about Zhou Yu. Then she bade the soldiers to push her carriage forward.

The two officers thought to themselves, "We are but servants—we dare not dispute with Lady Sun." Besides they saw Zhao Yun was bursting with wrath. So they ordered their men to stand aside and leave the road clear.

The cavalcade had only gone a little distance when up came the pursuers sent by Sun Quan. The two officers told the newcomers what had happened. "You were wrong to let them pass," said Chen Wu and Pan Zhang. "We have orders from our lord himself to arrest them."

So all four went in pursuit. When the noise of the approaching force reached the ears of Liu Bei he implored his wife again, "They are again pursuing us—what now?"

"You go on in front. Zhao Yun and I will keep them off."

So Liu Bei and three hundred men pushed on toward the riverbank while Zhao Yun reined up beside the lady's carriage and deployed his men ready for battle. And when the four men came up they dismounted and stood with folded arms.

"What are you doing here, officers?" asked Lady Sun.

"We have orders from our lord to request you and Liu Bei to return."

Calmly but bitterly she said, "This is exactly the work of you ruffians! You would sow dissension between brother and

sister. I am a married woman and I am on my way to my husband's home, not eloping with someone. Nor am I leaving clandestinely, for I have my mother's gracious permission to go with my husband to Jingzhou—and even if my brother were here himself he would have to observe the rules. Now because you have weapons in your hands you think you can slay me!"

She abused the four men to their faces so that they looked from one to another, unable to reply. And each thought to himself, "After all she and our lord are brother and sister, and the Dowager is on her side. Our lord is most filial and would never dare oppose his mother's decision. When they make up later then we will certainly be the ones to blame. We'd better just let them go." Besides, Liu Bei was nowhere to be seen and Zhao Yun looked angry and dangerous, ready to fight. So finally they gave way and withdrew. Then Lady Sun ordered the carriage to proceed.

"Let us all four go and report this to the commander," said Xu Sheng.

But that did not please them at all and they stood irresolute. After some time they saw a troop sweeping down on them like a hurricane. These were Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai with their thousand men.

"Have you fellows seen Liu Bei?" they cried as they rushed up.

"He passed in the morning."

"Why didn't you arrest him?"

The four told them what Lady Sun had said.

"That is just what our lord feared and so he gave us this sword and told us first to slay his sister and then Liu Bei. And if we disobey he will put us to death."

"What can be done? They are far away by now."

Jiang Qin said, "After all they are but on foot and cannot travel very fast." Following his suggestion, it was then decided that Xu Sheng and Ding Feng were to go to Zhou Yu and tell him to pursue the fugitives by water with fast boats, while the other four were to follow by land. Once they caught up with the runaways either by water or land, they were to slay them right away, without even waiting to hear what they might say.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei and his followers had reached the river, some distance from Caisang and he felt a little calmer. Here they searched along the bank, looking for boats, but there were no craft on the broad bosom of the stream. Liu Bei bowed his head, deep in thought.

Zhao Yun asked him not to worry, saying, "You have escaped from the tiger's jaws and have not far to go. I think our advisor must have some plan ready."

These words triggered memories of the luxurious life he had enjoyed in the house of his wife and tears rolled down his cheeks. A poem was written about this episode.

By the bank of the deep flowing Yangtze

Once was a wedding,
And the ruling houses of two states yet to be
Were allied by marriage.

See the beautiful maiden stepping slowly
To the golden bridal chamber.

Yet was the marriage but a ruse.

Its author vainly imagined that a hero,
Sinking in amorous toils,
Would forget his high intent and great resolve.

Liu Bei told Zhao Yun to go down the bank to find some boats. Suddenly soldiers rushed to report that there was a huge cloud of dust behind them. Ascending a hill he saw riding swiftly toward them an army that seemed to cover the whole earth. He said with a sigh, "We have been fleeing for days. Our men are worn out and our horses spent. Now the pursuers are on us again and we will all die in this place, far from home."

He watched them approaching nearer and nearer. Then, as things began to look most desperate, he saw a line of some twenty boats all in the act of setting their sails.

"By good luck here are some boats," said Zhao Yun. "Let us get on board quickly, row to the other bank and see what can be done."

Liu Bei and his bride hastened down the bank and went into a boat. Zhao Yun and the soldiers also embarked. Then they saw coming out of the cabin a man in a Taoist robe, who

laughed loudly, saying, “My lord, Zhuge Liang has been waiting for you for a long time.”

All the merchants on board were actually their men from Jingzhou in disguise, and Liu Bei rejoiced at this sudden happy turn of affairs.

Before long the pursuers reached the bank. Zhuge Liang pointed to them and laughed, saying, “I foresaw this a long time ago. You may return and tell Zhou Yu not to use this ‘fair damsel ruse’ again.”

Those on the bank sent a flight of arrows at the boats but they were already too far away. The four officers on the bank could only stare.

As the boats were sailing along a great noise was heard on the river behind them and there appeared a huge fleet of warships, sailing under the flag of Zhou Yu who was there in command, supported on two sides by Huang Gai and Han Dang. They had the momentum of a drove of flying horses and came along swift as a comet, gaining on the fugitives rapidly.

Zhuge Liang ordered the boats to row over to the north bank where, abandoning the vessels, they landed and took to the road. Presently Zhou Yu’s men also disembarked to keep up the pursuit, with only a few in front riding horses. When they reached the borders of Huangzhou, Liu Bei and his party were not far away, and so they pressed on even harder. All of a sudden, the rolling of drums was heard and from out of a gully dashed a force of swordsman led by Guan Yu.

Zhou Yu was too unprepared to do anything but flee for his life and Guan Yu pursued. As the men of Wu ran away, two more enemy officers came forth and attacked them, so that they suffered a severe defeat. Hardly had Zhou Yu managed to get down into his ship when soldiers on the bank jeered at him on the undoing of his scheme. They were told to shout:

> Matchless indeed are Zhou Yu's wonderful designs,
>
> He loses his men and gives Liu his bride besides.

Zhou Yu was so annoyed that he would have gone up the bank to fight again if his officers had not restrained him.

"My schemes have failed," he thought. "How could I look my lord in the face?"

All at once he cried aloud and with that his old wound reopened. The officers came to his help but he had already lost consciousness.

> Twice had he planned and twice had he lost the game;
> He was full of resentment and overwhelmed with shame.

What might happen to Zhou Yu will be narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

Cao Cao Gives a Banquet in the Bronze Bird Tower

Zhuge Liang Provokes Zhou Yu to Anger a Third Time

At the end of the last chapter Zhou Yu was worsted by the three groups of troops placed in ambush by Zhuge Liang. His two colleagues contrived to get him clear and they found refuge in the ships, though with the loss of many of their men. When Zhou Yu looked back he saw Liu Bei, Lady Sun, and their followers all quietly resting on a hilltop. How could such a sight fail to provoke him to rage? And in his anger his wound, not yet healed, burst open once again. He fainted and fell. His men raised him and his ship set sail. They were not pursued and Liu Bei proceeded to Jingzhou, where great celebrations were duly prepared in honor of his recent marriage and rewards were distributed among the officers.

Meanwhile Zhou Yu had gone to Caisang while Jiang Qin and the other three officers bore the sad tidings to Sun Quan, who was beside himself with fury—his first response was to send an army under Cheng Pu to seize Jingzhou. Zhou Yu also wrote from his sick bed urging his lord to take vengeance.

But Zhang Zhao objected. “Cao Cao has never forgotten his defeat, but he dares not attempt to avenge himself while we

are united with Liu Bei. If in a moment's anger you fall upon your former ally, Cao Cao will certainly seize the opportunity and your position will be most perilous."

Another advisor called Gu Yong supported him, saying, "Beyond all doubt Cao Cao has his spies here. As soon as he hears of any rift in the friendship between Sun and Liu, he will attempt to come to an understanding with Liu Bei who, being afraid of your power, will accept his offer and take his side. Such an alliance will be a perpetual menace to our land. The plan, for now, is to secure the friendship of Liu Bei by petitioning to the Emperor that he be made Governor of Jingzhou, which will make Cao Cao afraid to send any army against us. At the same time, it will raise kindly feelings in the heart of Liu Bei and win his support. Later you can employ some trusted people to provoke a quarrel between Cao Cao and Liu Bei and set them at each other's throats. That will be your opportunity to strike."

"You are quite right," said Sun Quan. "But who should I send to accomplish such a mission?"

"There is a suitable man here, one whom Cao Cao admires."

"Who is he?"

"Hua Xin. Why not send him?"

Therefore Hua Xin was appointed envoy and sent to the capital with Sun Quan's letter. Once there he was told that Cao Cao and the other officials were at Yejun, celebrating the completion of the Bronze Bird Tower. So toward that place he went.

Indeed, Cao Cao had never forgotten his terrible defeat and harbored schemes to avenge it, but his fear of an alliance between his two chief enemies restrained him.

In the spring of the fifteenth year of Jian An, the construction of the Bronze Bird Tower was finished and Cao Cao went down to Yejun with a vast assembly to celebrate its completion with banquets. This magnificent piece of architecture was erected on the bank of the Zhang River. The Bronze Bird Tower stood in the center, flanked by two others named the Jade Dragon and the Golden Phoenix, each rising a hundred feet high into the air. There were two bridges on top to connect them. Gold and jade vied with each other in the numerous apartments.

At the opening ceremony Cao Cao wore a golden headdress inlaid with jewels and a robe of green brocade, girded with a belt of jade. On his feet were pearl-encrusted shoes. So clad he took his seat as host, while his followers, civil and military, were drawn up below the terrace.

For the military officers an archery competition was arranged and the prize, a red fighting robe of West Chuan silk, was suspended from one of the drooping branches of a willow tree, beneath which was the target. The distance was a hundred paces. The competitors were divided into two bands, those of the Cao family being dressed in red and the others in green. With carved bows and long arrows, they mounted on their steeds, waiting for their master to give the signal for the contest to begin. Each was to shoot one arrow and the person who hit the red bull's-eye would get the robe; those who missed were to pay the forfeit of drinking a cup of cold water.

As soon as the signal was given a red-robed youth rode quickly forth. He was Cao Xiu. Three times he galloped swiftly to and fro. Then he fitted the notch of his arrow to the string, pulled the bow to its full and the arrow flew straight to the bull's eye.

The clang of the gongs and the roll of the drums announced the feat, which was cheered by all. And Cao Cao, as he sat on the platform, was delighted.

"A very promising thousand-li colt of our Cao family," he said to those about him. He was on the point of sending someone to get the fine robe to present to the young man when suddenly from the green side rode out an officer who cried, "It would be more fitting to let those of us of other families compete first for the prime minister's silken robe; it is not right for members of the Cao family to take the lead."

Cao Cao looked at the speaker, who turned out to be Wen Ping. And the other officers cried, "Let us see what his shooting is like!"

So Wen Ping fitted an arrow to the string of his bow and fired from horseback while galloping. To the delight of the onlookers he also made a bull's eye, which was honored by another salute from gongs and drums.

"Quickly bring me the robe," cried Wen Ping.

But at once from the ranks of the red-robed officers dashed forward another competitor, shouting fiercely, "How can you win what has been already won? But let me show you how I can shoot an arrow that will out-shine both your shots."

He drew his bow to the full and the arrow flew straight to the heart of the red. The onlookers, cheering in unison, saw that this new competitor was Cao Hong, who now also claimed the robe.

However, yet another archer came forth from the green-robed ranks, waving his bow and crying, “There is nothing remarkable about the shooting of the three of you. See how I can shoot.”

This man was Zhang He. He put his horse to the gallop, then turning, shot backwards, also hitting the center of the red.

Thus four arrows were now sticking in the bull’s eye and all agreed that it was marvelous archery.

“I think the robe should be mine,” said Zhang He.

Before he could finish speaking a fifth competitor came out from the red-robed officers. “You shot backwards—but that is commonplace enough,” he said. “Look how I can shoot the heart of hearts.”

The speaker was Xiahou Yuan. He galloped off to the very limit of the target range and then turning backwards he sent his arrow right into the middle of the other four.

As the gongs and drums broke out Xiahou Yuan checked his horse and said, with his hand on his bow, “Doesn’t that shot deserve the robe?”

To echo his words yet another rival came forward, crying, “Leave the robe there for me.” It was Xu Huang.

“Can you do better?” asked Xiahou Yuan.

“Yours is no great feat. I will show you how I will win the robe after all.”

So speaking, Xu Huang fitted an arrow to his bow, aimed at the distant willow branch from which hung the robe, and shot. As the arrow flew, the branch snapped and the robe fluttered to the ground. At once Xu Huang dashed over, picked up the robe, and slipped it over his shoulders.

Then riding swiftly to the platform he thanked the prime minister for the prize. All present, including Cao Cao himself, were overcome with admiration. But just as Xu Huang was turning to ride away another green-robed officer leaped out from beside the platform, shouting, “Where are you taking that robe? Leave it to me at once!”

All eyes turned to this new contender, whom they discovered was Xu Chu. Xu Huang cried, “The robe has already been awarded to me—do you dare to take it from me by force?”

Xu Chu made no reply but galloped up to snatch the robe. As his horse drew near Xu Huang struck at his rival with his bow, but Xu Chu seized it with one hand while with the other he dragged his opponent off his saddle. Xu Huang hurriedly let go of the bow and dismounted. Xu Chu, too, slipped down from his horse and the two began to pummel each other with their fists. Cao Cao immediately sent men to separate them, but in the struggle the silk robe was torn to shreds. He called the angry rivals before him and they came, one shooting fierce looks of hate, the other grinding his teeth with rage.

“Never mind the robe—I only wanted to see your skill,” said Cao Cao, smiling. “What does a robe matter?”

So he called all the officers to him one by one and to each he presented a bolt of West Chuan silk. They thanked him for the generous gift and took their seats in due order. Then to the melody of an ensemble of music, delicious dishes of every kind were brought to the banquet tables. The officials drank one to another and hearty felicitations were exchanged.

Cao Cao looked around at those about him, saying, “Since the military officers have competed in mounted archery for our enjoyment and displayed their boldness and skill, why don’t you, my learned scholars, compose some lofty odes to make the completion of the tower an occasion of magnificent grandeur?”

“We are most willing to obey your command,” they replied, all bowing low.

Presently a group of scholars, including Wang Lang, Chen Lin and others, presented a poem each. Every poem sang the praise of Cao Cao’s celebrated services and great merits, implying at the same time that he was worthy to receive the highest honor of all.

When Cao Cao had read them he laughed. “You gentlemen are really too flattering. As a matter of fact I am but a simple man who began his career after being recommended to be an official. And when the troubles came I built myself a fine little cottage fifty li east of my home town, where I meant to study in spring and summer and hunt in fall and winter until the country was once more tranquil enough for me to come

out and seek office. To my surprise, I was given a small military post that changed the course of my life when I decided to repress the rebellion and so make a name for myself. I thought that I might win an inscription on my tomb, something like 'Here lies Lord Cao Cao of Han, the general who restored order in the west.' That would have been ample for the work of a lifetime. I recall now that since I destroyed Dong Zhuo and smote the Yellow Turbans I have captured Yuan Shu, broken down Lu Bu, exterminated Yuan Shao, conquered Liu Biao and so subdued the whole empire. As prime minister of the state I have attained the pinnacle of honor and have nothing more to aspire for. Were it not for me, I cannot imagine how many there would be styling themselves emperor or calling themselves princes. There might be people who, seeing how powerful I am, suspect that I harbor some ulterior motive, but they are quite mistaken. I always remember what Confucius said of King Wen—that he was perfectly virtuous—and this saying is ever engraved on my mind. However, I cannot give up my army and retire simply as lord of my fief, for I am afraid once I lay down my military power I will become the victim of my enemies. Should I be defeated, the state would crumble and so I cannot risk bringing real disaster to the country for the sake of my own vanity. You are obviously not aware of my heart."

As he finished, all his subordinates rose and bowed to him, saying: "None can equal your virtue, sir, not even Duke Zhou or the great Minister Yi Yin."

After this speech Cao Cao drank several cups of wine in quick succession and became quite intoxicated. He told his servants to bring him writing brush and inkstone so that he might also compose a poem. But as he was beginning to write

there suddenly came reports of startling news. He was told that Sun Quan, ruler of Wu, had sent an envoy to present a petition that recommended Liu Bei to be appointed Governor of Jingzhou; that Sun Quan's sister was now Liu Bei's wife; and that along the River Han the greater part of the nine districts was under Liu Bei's rule.

Cao Cao was seized with such a quaking fear at the news that he threw the brush on the floor. Cheng Yu was surprised and said to him, "You have been among fighting men for myriads, sir, and you have been in danger from stones and arrows many a time, but never have you betrayed any sign of agitation. Why are you then so affected at the news of Liu Bei's possession of Jingzhou?"

Cao Cao replied, "Liu Bei is a dragon among men. All his life so far he has never found his opportunities, but now that he has obtained Jingzhou it is as though the dragon, once a captive, has escaped to the mighty deep. There is good reason for me to tremble with fear."

"Do you know the reason of the coming of Hua Xin?" asked Cheng Yu.

Cao Cao replied that he did not.

"Sun Quan is apprehensive of Liu Bei and he would have attacked him were it not for you, sir. He fears that you might fall upon him while he is wrestling with Liu Bei. Therefore he has taken this measure to relieve Liu Bei of his suspicions and at the same time to keep you from invading him."

Cao Cao nodded his agreement.

Cheng Yu continued, “Now I have a plan to set Sun and Liu at one another and give you the opportunity to destroy them both.”

“What is it?” asked Cao Cao.

“The mainstay of Wu is Zhou Yu. You can get Zhou Yu appointed prefect of Nanjun, Cheng Pu as prefect of Jiangxia, and retain the envoy Hua Xin in the capital for some important post. As both these cities have fallen into Liu Bei’s hands, Zhou Yu will assuredly attack Liu Bei and that will be our chance. Isn’t this a good scheme?”

“You are really a man after my own heart.”

So he summoned the emissary from Wu and overwhelmed him with gifts. That day was the last of the feasting and merry-making and Cao Cao, with all the company, returned to the capital, where he at once presented a memorial to the Emperor assigning Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu to the posts mentioned above, while retaining Hua Xin at the capital.

A messenger bearing the commissions for their new offices was sent down to Wu and both Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu accepted the appointments. This move of Cao Cao’s made Zhou Yu all the more anxious to have his revenge on Liu Bei. He wrote to Sun Quan, asking him to send Lu Su to Liu Bei to renew the demand for returning Jingzhou.

So Lu Su was summoned and his master said to him, “You are the guarantor in the loan of Jingzhou to Liu Bei, but he still delays in returning it. How long am I to wait?”

“The writing said plainly that it would be handed over to us after his occupation of West Chuan.”

“What is the use of such an empty promise?” Sun Quan retorted. “So far, they have not moved a single soldier to capture it. Am I supposed to wait until I grow old?”

“I will go and inquire,” said Lu Su. So he took a boat and sailed to Jingzhou.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were at Jingzhou gathering in supplies in large quantities, and drilling their men. From all quarters men of learning flocked to their side. In the midst of this they heard of Lu Su’s coming and Liu Bei asked Zhuge Liang what he thought of it.

Zhuge Liang replied, “Only lately has Sun Quan concerned himself with getting you appointed governor of Jingzhou, which was intended to implant fear in Cao Cao. In his turn, Cao Cao obtained for Zhou Yu the prefectship of Nanjun, which was designed to stir up strife between our two sides and set us fighting so that he might accomplish his own ends. This visit of Lu Su means that Zhou Yu, having been assigned this new office, wishes to force us out of this place.”

“Then how are we to reply?”

“If he mentions the subject, you should just start wailing loudly. When your lamentation is at its saddest I will appear to deal with him.”

Having decided on their plan Liu Bei received Lu Su at his residence. When greetings were exchanged the guest was asked to take a seat.

"Sir, as the husband of a daughter of Wu you have become my master," said Lu Su. "And I dare not sit in your presence."

Liu Bei laughed. "You are an old friend," he said. "Why this excessive politeness?"

So Lu Su took his seat. And when tea had been served the guest said, "I have come at the order of my master to discuss the subject of Jingzhou. You have had the use of the place for a long time. Now that our two houses are allied by marriage, I hope you will hand it back to my master for family's sake."

At this Liu Bei covered his face and began to cry.

"What is the matter?" asked the guest.

Liu Bei only wept the more bitterly.

Then Zhuge Liang came in from behind a screen and said, "I have been listening. Do you know why my lord weeps so bitterly?"

"No, I don't."

"But it's easy to see. When my lord sought temporary occupation of Jingzhou, he promised to return it when he had obtained the western region. But when he comes to consider it there are grave difficulties. Now Liu Zhang of Yizhou is a brother of my lord, both being blood relations of the ruling

family. If my lord were to move an army to attack Liu Zhang's cities, he fears he would be blamed by the world. And if he doesn't, after he has yielded Jingzhou to your master, where can he stay? Yet, if he retained this place he would offend the brother of his bride. This is indeed a complicated matter and that is why he weeps so bitterly."

Zhuge Liang's words touched Liu Bei to the heart and he beat his breast and stamped his feet, weeping even more bitterly.

Lu Su attempted to console him by saying, "Do not be distressed, sir. Let us hear what Zhuge Liang proposes."

"I would beg you to return to your master and tell him all. Tell him of this great dilemma and entreat him to let us stay here a little longer."

"But suppose he refuses—what then?" asked Lu Su.

"How can he refuse now that he is related by marriage to my master?" asked Zhuge Liang. "I hope you will use your eloquence to persuade him."

Lu Su was by nature a kindly man and, seeing Liu Bei in such distress, he could not but consent. Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang both thanked him most cordially, and after a banquet the emissary took his boat to return. However, he went straight to Caisang to see Zhou Yu and tell him what had happened.

Zhou Yu stamped his feet and cried, "My friend, you've been fooled again. In the days when Liu Bei was still dependent on Liu Biao, he had often cherished the intention to supplant the latter. Do you think he'll pity Liu Zhang in the least? As I see

it, this will mean much trouble for you. However, I have a scheme which I think can beat Zhuge Liang. Only you'll have to make another journey."

"I should be pleased to hear your fine scheme," said Lu Su.

"Don't go to see our master now. Return to Jingzhou and say to Liu Bei that since his family and the Suns are related by marriage, they really form but one house, and since he has apprehensions about attacking the west we will do it for him. Once we acquire the region we will exchange it for Jingzhou."

"But West Chuan is far away and not easy to reach. Can your scheme work?"

"You really are the most honest man!" Zhou Yu laughed. "We'll move our army out under this pretext, but actually we will go to Jingzhou, and we'll catch him unprepared. The road to the west runs through his city and we'll call upon him for supplies. He'll certainly come out to thank the army and we'll take the opportunity to slay him and seize Jingzhou. In this way we can have our revenge and at the same time resolve your predicament."

This seemed an excellent plan to Lu Su and he returned once more to Jingzhou. Before receiving him, Liu Bei against sought advice from Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang said, "I do not think he has been to see his master—instead, he has called on Zhou Yu at Caisang. They must have decided upon some scheme, which he is to talk you

into accepting. However, let him talk— only watch me and when you see me nod, agree to whatever he may propose."

Lu Su was then admitted. "My master admires your noble virtue, sir," he said to Liu Bei. "And after consultations with his officers he has decided to take West Chuan on your behalf and, when that place is subdued, it will be given to you as a dowry for his sister, while Jingzhou can be exchanged for it without further delay. However, when the army passes here he expects you to contribute some necessary supplies."

Here Zhuge Liang at once nodded, at the same time saying, "We could hardly have hoped for such kindness."

At this signal Liu Bei thanked Lu Su with joined hands and said, "This is due to your efforts on our behalf."

"When your mighty army arrives we'll certainly come out to meet it and entertain the soldiers," said Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su rejoiced in secret and soon took his leave and went homeward.

But Liu Bei as yet could not figure out what all this was about and he asked his advisor of Lu Su's real intention.

Zhuge Liang laughed. "Zhou Yu's days are numbered. That ruse of his cannot even deceive a child."

Liu Bei again asked him for an explanation.

"This ruse is known as 'Borrowing a passageway to exterminate the kingdom of Guo.'* Under the pretense of

going to attack the west they intend to capture this place, and when you go out to greet their army you will be seized; then they will dash into the city, which they hope to find unprepared."

"And what are we to do?"

"Have no fear—all we have to do is 'to prepare a hidden bow to get the fierce tiger; to spread the enticing bait to hook the big fish.' When Zhou Yu comes this time, he will be nine-tenths a corpse, if not completely dead."

Then he called in Zhao Yun and gave him secret instructions. Liu Bei was overjoyed.

Let Zhou Yu lay what plans he will,

His rival anticipated his skill;

Fair his bait did seem to look,
But he forgot the hidden hook.

Lu Su hastened back to Zhou Yu to tell him that all was going as he desired and Liu Bei would come out to welcome the army. Zhou Yu laughed gleefully, saying, "At last! This time they will fall into my trap!"

He asked Lu Su to submit a report to their master and ordered Cheng Pu to bring up reinforcements. By then, he had nearly recovered from the arrow wound and felt quite himself again. The army, totaling 50,000 men, was divided into three sections and Zhou Yu was with the second division. While

voyaging in his ship he could not contain himself with joy to think how he was to trap Zhuge Liang at last.

At Xiakou he inquired if there was anyone to welcome him. His men told him that Liu Bei had sent Mi Zhu to meet him.

“What about the rewards for the army?” asked Zhou Yu as soon as Mi Zhu came.

“My master has seen to that—all is prepared,” said Mi Zhu.

“Where is Liu Bei?” asked Zhou Yu.

“He is at Jingzhou, waiting outside the city walls to offer you some wine before you set off.”

“This long expedition is for your benefit,” said Zhou Yu. “The rewards for our army must be very substantial.”

Having listened to what Zhou Yu had to say, Mi Zhu returned to his own city, while the battleships of Wu sailed in close order up the river and took their places along the bank. As they approached the town of Gongan, quietness seemed to reign on all sides. Not a ship was visible anywhere, nor was anyone waiting to greet them. Zhou Yu pressed forward till he came quite near Jingzhou, and still the wide river lay calm. Scouts came back to report that two white flags were flying on the city walls, but there was no one in sight.

Zhou Yu began to feel suspicious. He ordered his fleet to anchor along the bank and he went ashore, from where he rode toward Jingzhou, together with his officers and 3,000 veteran soldiers.

Presently he came to the city wall. There was no sign of life. Reining in his steed, he bade his soldiers call at the gate. Then a guard posted on the wall asked who they were. The men of Wu replied that it was their commander in person. Immediately, the clang of a clapper was heard and the wall became alive with armed men. And from the tower came out Zhao Yun who demanded, "Why are you here, General?"

"I am going to take the west for you," replied Zhou Yu. "Have you not been told?"

"Our advisor knows that you want to try the ruse of 'borrowing a passageway to destroy the kingdom of Guo' and so he stationed me here. And my master said that as he and the ruler of the west country are both members of the reigning family, he could not think of such baseness as attacking West Chuan. If you people of Wu do so, he would be forced to go away into the mountains and become a recluse. He could not bear to betray the confidence of the people."

At this Zhou Yu turned his horse to return but just then his scouts came up to say that an unknown number of armed troops had come up from all four sides, with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei leading two of them. Soon the sound of their tramping shook the very heavens. They all shouted they wanted to capture Zhou Yu.

At this Zhou Yu's anger was so intense that his old wound burst open again and with a great cry, he collapsed to the ground.

Too deep for him his rival is; in vain he sought

Moves after moves; his efforts came to nought.

The fate of Zhou Yu will be related in the next chapter.

Footnote

* An allusion to an incident from the days of the Spring and Autumn period. The ruler of Jin borrowed a passageway from the state of Yu to attack the state of Guo, but returning from his victory in subduing Kuo he also wiped out Yu.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Zhuge Liang Mourns at Caisang

Pang Tong Governs at Leiyang

In the last chapter it was narrated that a sudden rage filled the bosom of Zhou Yu and he fell to the ground. Then he was carried to his boat. It only added to his rage and mortification to be told that his rivals could be seen on the top of a hill drinking and enjoying themselves. He cried, grinding his teeth: "They think I will never be able to gain West Chuan. But I will! I swear I will!"

As he lay vowing to avenge himself, his master's brother, Sun Yu, arrived and Zhou Yu told him everything that had happened.

"My brother sent me to assist you," said Sun Yu.

So orders were given for the army to press forward. When they got to Baqiu, however, their advance stopped, for scouts reported large forces under Liu Feng and Guan Ping barring the river route. This failure added fuel to the flames of Zhou Yu's anger.

About this time a letter from Zhuge Liang arrived, which ran as follows:

"Since our parting at Caisang I have thought of you often. Now I hear that you desire to take West Chuan, which I deem an unwise course of action. The people there are strong and the country is precipitous and difficult to occupy. Weak as its governor is, he is able to defend himself. Now you exhaust your army with this arduous expedition that covers 10,000 li in distance in order to render a great service, yet can anyone foretell the final result? No, not even the great ancient general Wu Qi could say for certain, nor could Sun Wu be sure of a success. Furthermore, Cao Cao suffered a severe defeat at the Red Cliff—do you think he will ever cease to seek revenge? Now if you undertake a long expedition, will he not seize the occasion to fall upon Wu and grind it to dust? Such an outcome is more than I could bear and I venture to warn you of the possible danger. I wish you may condescend to consider this."

As he finished reading the letter Zhou Yu heaved a deep sigh of sorrow. He called for paper and brush to write to his lord and, having done this, he said to his officers assembled around him: "It is not that I don't want to do my best for my country, but my end is at hand. You must continue to aid our master till his great design is achieved."

Here he fainted. Slowly he regained consciousness and as he looked up to Heaven he sighed pensively, "Oh God, since you made me; why did you also create Zhuge Liang?"

Soon after he passed away; he was only thirty-six.

At the battle of the Red Cliff he made his name;

Though young in years a veteran's renown he gained.

In songs his lofty aspirations are unveiled;

With hospitality he entertained his friends.

Persuasive, he once obtained a large gift of grain;

Capable, he led an army of tens of thousands.

Baqiu was his deathbed, there his fate found him.

Sadly, indeed, people mourned him.

After his death his officers dispatched his dying message to Sun Quan, who burst into loud wailing at the sad tiding. When he opened the letter he saw that the deceased general had recommended Lu Su as his successor. This is the letter:

> Possessing but ordinary abilities, there was no reason why I should have been the recipient of your confidence and high office, but I have spared no efforts in the leadership of your great army in order that I might prove my gratitude. Yet none can measure life and the number of our days is ordained by fate. Before I could attain my desires my feeble body has failed me. How I regret this! At present Cao Cao is threatening us in the north and our battle with him is not yet over, while Liu Bei lives on our land, ready to fall on us like a fierce tiger. None can foretell the fate of the empire in these weary days of

> stress for the officers and of particular anxiety for you, my lord.
>
> Lu Su is most loyal, careful in all matters and a suitable man to succeed to my office. When a man is near death his words are sincere. If you would give it a favorable consideration I would die contented.

"He had talents worthy to be a king's counselor," cried Sun Quan, amid his tears. "He has left me, alas! too soon, and whom can I depend upon? But he recommended Lu Su and I can do nothing better than take that advice."

Thus he appointed Lu Su commander-in-chief. In the meantime, he also saw to it that the coffin of his beloved general was sent back to Caisang for the funeral.

On the night of Zhou Yu's death, Zhuge Liang was gazing up at the heavens when he saw a bright star fall to the earth. "Zhou Yu is dead," he said to himself with a smile. At dawn he told this to Liu Bei, who sent men to find out, and they soon came back to confirm his death.

"Now that he is dead, what will happen?" asked Liu Bei.

"Lu Su is sure to succeed him," said Zhuge Liang. "I see in the heavens signs of an assembly of capable men in the east so I will go there under the pretext of mourning for Zhou Yu. I will find some able scholars there to help you."

"But the officers of Wu might harm you," said Liu Bei.

“While Zhou Yu was alive I had no fear—is there anything to dread now that he is gone?”

However, he took Zhao Yun as commander of his escort of five hundred soldiers when he embarked for Baqiu, and on the way he heard of Lu Su’s succession to the late general’s post. As the coffin of Zhou Yu had been sent to Caisang, Zhuge Liang continued his journey there and, on landing, was kindly received by Lu Su. The officers of Wu did not conceal their enmity but the sight of the redoubtable Zhao Yun, always close at hand, kept them from trying to hurt Zhuge Liang.

The sacrificial offerings brought by Zhuge Liang were arranged in order before the bier and he himself poured the libation. Then he knelt and read this chant of lamentation:

> Alas, Gong-Jin (Zhou Yu)! How tragic it is for you to die in your prime! One’s length of life is in the hands of God, yet do men suffer and my heart is deeply grieved for you. I pour this libation that your spirit may enjoy its fragrance.
>
> How I lament for you! I recall your younger days passed in the companionship of Sun Ce, when, generous in your care for the needy, you gave up your abode for him.
>
> I recall your ardent youth when you distinguished yourself in conquering the land south of the Great River.

I recall your ripe strength when you guarded the distant Baqiu, putting fear into the heart of Liu Biao, destroying rebels and ensuring safety.

I recall the grace of your manhood. Married to a fair maid of the Qiao family, son-in-law of a minister, you were such as would add luster to the Han Court.

I recall your resolute spirit. You stood firm and withstood all obstacles. As in the beginning your wings drooped not, so in the end your pinions spread wide.

I recall your abandon when your false friend, Jiang Gan, came to persuade you at Poyang. There you manifested your lofty ideals.

I recall your magnificent talents, proved in civil administration as in military arts. Employing the scheme of fire you weakened the strength of the fierce enemy and defeated him in the end.

I recall you as you were but yesterday, bold and successful, and I weep for your untimely death. Prostrate I bleed with sorrow. You were loyal and upright in heart, noble and talented by nature. Your life has been but three decades but your fame will endure for ages.

How I grieve for you! My insides writhe with sorrow and my deep-seated sadness will never cease. The very heavens are darkened. The army is sad; your lord sheds tears; your friends weep floods.

Scanty of ability am I, yet even of me you begged plans and sought schemes to aid Wu to repulse Cao Cao, to restore the Hans and comfort the Lius. Joined in the same cause our two sides assisted each other in every move, for without one the other would not exist. And there was no worry for us then.

Alas, my friend! The quick and the dead are ever separate; they mingle never. If in the deep shades spirits have understanding you now read my inmost heart, yet hereafter there will be none on earth to comprehend.

Alas, the pain!

Pray accept my offerings.

The dirge finished, Zhuge Liang bowed to the ground while tears gushed forth in floods. The officers who stood by the bier said one to another, "People lied when they said these two were enemies; look how sad Zhuge Liang is at our commander's death." Lu Su was particularly touched by this display of feeling and he thought to himself, "Clearly Zhuge Liang loved him much, but Gong-jin (Zhou Yu) was not broad-minded enough and that brought him his death."

Before the Sleeping Dragon emerged from his Nanyang retreat
Many brilliant men had descended upon this earth;

Since, Oh azure Heaven, you made Zhou Yu
Why needed dusty earth produce a Zhuge Liang?

Lu Su gave a banquet for Zhuge Liang, after which the guest took his leave. Just as he was embarking his arm was clutched by a person in a Taoist robe, who said with a laugh, "You literally drove Zhou Yu to his death, yet you come here as a mourner. Isn't this an open insult to Wu! It's as good as saying they have no one left."

Zhuge Liang turned at once and saw that it was none other than his old friend Pang Tong, or Phoenix Fledgling. Then he laughed in his turn, and hand in hand the two went down into the ship, where they had a heart to heart talk. Before leaving, Zhuge Liang gave his friend a letter and said, "I don't think Sun Quan will use you as you merit. If you find life here but slightly distasteful, come to Jingzhou and help me to support my master. He is liberal and virtuous and will appreciate what you have spent your life in learning."

Then they parted and Zhuge Liang went alone to Jingzhou.

Lu Su had the coffin of Zhou Yu taken to Wuhu, where Sun Quan mourned it in deep lamentations and gave orders to bury him with great honor in his native place. The dead general left two sons and a daughter, the sons being named Xun and Yin, and Sun Quan treated them with tenderness.

Then Lu Su went to see his master and said, "I have been wrongly recommended by Gong-jin for I am but a man of mediocre talent and am unfitted for this post. But I can commend to you a certain able man conversant with all knowledge. In strategy he is no inferior to Guan Zhong or Yue Yi, and in war, his plans are as good as those of Sun Wu and Wu Qi. Zhou Yu often took his advice and Zhuge Liang

admires him. And he lives close at hand. Why not employ him?"

This was good news for Sun Quan, who asked the man's name, and when he heard it was Pang Tong, he replied, "Yes, I know him by reputation. Let him come."

So Pang Tong was invited to the palace and introduced to the master. After the initial greetings Sun Quan looked at his visitor and was disappointed with the man's appearance, which was indeed extraordinary: he had bushy eyebrows, a turned-up nose, a dark skin, and a stubby beard. So Sun Quan was prejudiced against him.

"What is the specialty of your learning?" he asked.

Pang Tong replied, "One must not be narrow, but must adapt to circumstances."

"How does your learning compare with that of Zhou Yu?" asked Sun Quan.

"Mine is very different from his."

Now Sun Quan had always liked his late general most and he could not bear to hear him disparaged. This speech of Pang Tong's only increased his dislike. So he said, "You may retire, sir. I will send for you when I can employ you."

Pang Tong uttered one long sigh and went away. When he had left Lu Su said, "My lord, why not employ him?"

“What good will that be? He is just one of those conceited mad fellows.”

“He did the first meritable service at the battle of the Red Cliff. It was he who tricked Cao Cao into chaining his ships together.”

“No, it was simply Cao Cao who wanted to chain his ships together, and not necessarily to his credit. In any case, I give you my word that I will not employ him.”

Lu Su went out and explained to Pang Tong that the failure was not due to lack of recommendation, but a whim of Sun Quan’s and he asked Pang Tong to be patient. The disappointed strategist hung his head and sighed without speaking.

“Are you thinking of leaving Wu?” said Lu Su.

But still Pang Tong was silent.

“With your wonderful talents you will certainly be successful wherever you go. Please tell me exactly where you want to go?”

“I think I will join Cao Cao,” said Pang Tong.

“That would be flinging a gleaming pearl into the dust,” said Lu Su. “Better go to Liu Bei, who would appreciate you and give you an important position.”

“I am also thinking of going to him,” said Pang Tong. “I was only joking just now.”

“I will give you a letter to recommend you to Liu Bei. If you go to him you must try to maintain peace between him and my lord and get them to act together against Cao Cao.”

“That has been the one desire of my life.”

He took the letter offered by Lu Su and soon made his way to Jingzhou. He arrived at a moment when Zhuge Liang was away on an inspection journey. When he was announced Liu Bei at once asked him to come in, for he was no stranger in name.

When Pang Tong was admitted he saluted but did not make an obeisance and this, coupled with his ugly appearance, did not please his host.

“You have come from a long and arduous journey,” said Liu Bei.

At this point Pang Tong should have produced the recommendation letters from Zhuge Liang and Lu Su, but he did not. Instead he replied, “I hear that you welcome the wise and receive the talented, so I have come to offer myself to your service.”

“The country has only known a little peace and there is unfortunately no vacant office. But away to the northeast there is a small town called Leiyang, which needs a chief. I can offer you that post until there should be something more fitting.”

“How unfair Liu Bei treats me!” thought Pang Tong in distress. He wanted to impress Liu Bei with his learning, but

seeing his friend Zhuge Liang was absent, he had to control his annoyance and accept the offer against his wish. Soon he took his leave and started for his new office.

But when he arrived at his post he paid no attention to business at all but gave himself up entirely to dissipation. The taxes were not collected and the lawsuits not resolved. News of this neglect of his duty reached Liu Bei, who became angry and said, “How dare this stiff-necked pedant throw my administration into disorder?”

So he sent Zhang Fei on a general inspection tour of the southern district to look into any misconduct and disorder. Sun Qian was appointed Zhang Fei’s assistant to help him in handling matters where tact was needed. In due course the inquisitors arrived at Leiyang, where they were welcomed by the officials and the people at the boundary. But the magistrate did not appear.

“Where is the magistrate?” asked Zhang Fei.

“Ever since his arrival, a hundred days and more ago, he has attended to no business, but spent his time from morning to night in drinking wine and is always intoxicated. Right now he is sleeping off a debauch and is not yet awake.”

This put Zhang Fei in a rage and he would have gone and seized the offender at once had not his colleague Sun Qian said, “Pang Tong is a man of great ability and it’d be wrong to deal with him in a summary fashion. Let’s go and inquire into it first. If he’s really so guilty we can punish him then.”

So they went to the magistracy, took their seats in the hall of justice, and summoned the magistrate before them. Pang Tong came dressed improperly, still under the influence of alcohol.

"My brother took you for a decent man," said Zhang Fei angrily, "and sent you here as magistrate. How dare you neglect all the affairs of the district?"

"What affairs of the district do you think I have neglected, General?" asked Pang Tong.

"You have been here over a hundred days yet you spent the whole time in dissipation. Can you deny that?"

"What will be the difficulty in dealing with the trivial business of a trifling district like this? Just sit down for a while, General, and I will attend to it."

So he asked the clerks to bring in all the cases accumulated over the hundred days and he would settle them at once. They brought in the piles of papers and ordered the accusers and the accused to appear before him, who soon came and knelt in the hall. Pang Tong, pen in hand, began to deal with the cases in an amazingly swift yet clear way, his ears listening to the pleadings, his mouth adjudging right or wrong, and his hand writing down the verdicts simultaneously. All his rulings were sound and reasonable, and never a mistake was made, as the grateful bows of the people proved. In less than half a day all the cases were handled correctly and the arrears of the hundred days settled and decided. Then, throwing aside his pen, the magistrate turned to Zhang Fei and asked: "Where is the neglect? When I can take on Cao Cao and Sun Quan as

easily as I can read this paper, what attention do I need to give to the business of this paltry place?"

Overwhelmed by the man's ability, Zhang Fei rose from his seat to apologize to him. "You are indeed a genius, sir. Forgive me for my disrespectful behavior. I will strongly commend you to my brother."

Then Pang Tong drew forth Lu Su's letter and showed it to Zhang Fei.

"Why didn't you show this to my brother when you first saw him?" asked Zhang Fei.

"If I had done so, it would seem as if I had to rely on a letter of recommendation to get myself an office."

Zhang Fei turned to his colleague gratefully. "If not for you, we would have lost a great talent."

They left the magistracy and returned to Liu Bei, to whom they related what had happened. Liu Bei was astonished and said, "It's my fault—I've treated a wise sage wrongly."

Zhang Fei then gave his brother Lu Su's letter which read: "Pang Tong is a genius, seldom met in a vast area. Employ him in some capacity where extraordinary talent is required and his powers will become apparent. Beware not to judge him by his looks or you may fail to appreciate his abilities. Then some others will gain him, which would be unfortunate."

While he was feeling mortified at the mistake he had made it was announced that Zhuge Liang had returned. Soon he entered the hall and, after saluting his lord, his first question was, “How is Advisor Pang?”

“He is in charge of Leiyang,” replied Liu Bei, “where he is given to drinking and neglects his administration.”

Zhuge Liang laughed. “My friend Pang Tong has extraordinary abilities and is ten times superior to me in learning. I gave him a letter for you, my lord. Did he present it?”

“Only today have I received this letter from Lu Su. I have seen no letter by you.”

“When a man of transcendent abilities is sent to a paltry post, he usually turns to his cups out of disillusion,” said Zhuge Liang.

“If it had not been for what my brother said, I should have lost a great man,” said Liu Bei. Without delay he sent Zhang Fei to invite Pang Tong to Jingzhou. When he arrived, Liu Bei went out to meet him and at the foot of the steps asked pardon for his mistake. At this moment Pang Tong produced the letter that Zhuge Liang had given him.

The letter briefly ran like this: “As soon as Phoenix Fledgling arrives he should be given an important post.”

Liu Bei rejoiced indeed as he read it, for he remembered what the recluse Sima Hui had told him: “Sleeping Dragon and Phoenix Fledgling—any man who can obtain the help of

either of them can conquer the world." Now that he had acquired both of them he felt sure the Hans would rise again.

Then he appointed Pang Tong as Zhuge Liang's assistant and gave him a general's rank, and the two famous strategists began training the army for future expeditions.

News of these happenings reached the capital and Cao Cao was told that Liu Bei, with Zhuge Liang and Pang Tong as his strategists, was recruiting and training men, gathering supplies, and forming a league with Sun Quan. Evidently he would launch an attack on the capital sooner or later. So Cao Cao summoned his strategists to discuss the plausibility of another expedition to the south.

Xun You said, "We can destroy Sun Quan first, since his ablest general, Zhou Yu, has just died. Liu Bei can be dealt with after that."

Cao Cao replied, "If I go on such a distant expedition, I am afraid Ma Teng will fall upon the capital. Last time, when we were at the Red Cliff, there were such rumors—we must guard against it."

Xun You said, "To my mind it is better to confer on Ma Teng the title of General–Conqueror of the South and send him against Wu. Thus he can be enticed to the capital and removed. Then you can have no fear of your southward expedition."

Cao Cao gladly approved and soon sent an envoy to summon Ma Teng from Xiliang in the far west.

Now Ma Teng was a descendant of a famous general called Ma Yuan. His father, Ma Su, had held a minor magistracy in the reign of Emperor Huan, but had lost it and drifted into western regions, where he mingled with the tribesmen of Qiang, and later married one of their women. Ma Teng was the son of this Qiang woman. Tall and majestic-looking, Ma Teng was nevertheless of a gentle and kindly disposition. He was much respected by the people. In the reign of Emperor Ling many Qiang people made trouble and Ma Teng raised a force and put down the uprising. For his service he received the title of General–Conqueror of the West. He and Han Sui, whose title was General–Guardian of the West, were pledged brothers.

On receiving the summons to the capital from Cao Cao he took his eldest son, Ma Chao, into his confidence and told him of his past life. “When Dong Cheng got the Girdle Edict from the Emperor, six of us had formed a secret society, of which Liu Bei was one, to destroy Cao Cao. For a long time we could accomplish nothing. Then Dong Cheng was put to death and Liu Bei was defeated time and again, while I was here in the far west, unable to help him. Recently, however, I hear that Liu Bei now holds Jingzhou, and I have been thinking of carrying out the plan we made so long ago. But here comes this summons by Cao Cao. What is to be done?”

Ma Chao replied, “Cao Cao sends for you in the name of the Emperor and if you do not go it will mean disobeying an imperial command and you will be punished. I think you can take this opportunity to go to the capital, where you may be able to carry out your original plan.”

But his nephew, Ma Dai, was opposed to this. “Cao Cao’s designs are unfathomable and if you go, uncle, I fear you will fall into his trap.”

“Let me lead our entire army to go with you and purge the empire of evil,” said Ma Chao. “Will that do?”

But his father did not agree. “No, you must take command of the Qiang troops for the defense of our territory here. Let your two brothers and your cousin go with me. When Cao Cao knows that you have the army here at your call and that Han Sui is prepared to assist, he will hardly dare to inflict any harm on me.”

“Father, if you go you must be careful not to enter the city straight away but must find out exactly what plots are afoot and act in accordance with the situations.”

“I will certainly take great care, so have no worries,” said the father.

Soon Ma Teng took 5,000 soldiers, with his two sons leading the van and his nephew bringing up the rear. These set out along the tortuous road toward the capital. Twenty li from the city they camped.

When Cao Cao heard of Ma Teng’s arrival he summoned an official called Huang Kui, to whom he said, “Ma Teng is to be sent to conquer the south and you are to be his advisor. I want you to go now to his camp and convey my regards to the army. Tell Ma Teng that as Xiliang is so remote and transport of grain difficult, he is not able to take too large an army of his own. I will send a large force to help him. Also tell him to

come soon for an audience with the Emperor and I will send him supplies then."

With these instructions Huang Kui went to see Ma Teng, who brought out wine and entertained him well. In his cups the messenger blurted out, "My father perished at the hands of Li Jue and Guo Si and my hatred burns still. Now there is another rebel in power wronging our prince."

"Who is that?" asked Ma Teng.

"Cao Cao, of course. Do you mean to say you do not know?"

Fearing that these words were but a trap for him, Ma Teng hastened to ask his guest to be careful lest he be overheard.

But he became angry. "Have you quite forgotten the Girdle Edict, eh?"

Ma Teng began to see he was sincere, so he confided in him his plan.

"He wants you to go in to see the Emperor, but there is no good intention there," said Huang Kui. "Do not go in but lead your men up close to the city and get Cao Cao to come out and inspect them—and when he comes out, assassinate him."

They two decided on how this plan could be worked out and the messenger, still hot with anger and excitement, returned home.

Seeing him so disturbed in mind, his wife asked him what was wrong. But he would not tell her anything. However, he

had a concubine, who had an intrigue with the wife's younger brother, Miao Ze, who much desired to marry her. Noticing, too, how agitated her lord was, the concubine spoke of it to her lover, and he told her to draw him out by putting a provocative question to him. "Ask him why people say Liu Bei is kindly and virtuous while Cao Cao is crafty and evil."

That night Huang Kui went to the chamber of his concubine and she presently asked him the question proposed by her lover. Her lord, still rather intoxicated, said, "You are only a woman—yet you know right from wrong. How can I, a man, stand aloof? My enemy and the man I would slay, if I could, is Cao Cao."

"But how? How are you able to do that?" she asked.

"I have made a plan with General Ma to assassinate Cao Cao tomorrow when he goes out to inspect the army."

After learning this from the concubine Miao Ze went to tell Cao Cao, who at once made arrangements to defeat the scheme. He called up four trusted officers and gave them orders for the following day. This done, he arrested Huang Kui and all his household.

The next day, as arranged, Ma Teng led his western men toward the city. When they came close to the wall he saw in front a number of red flags bearing the name of Cao Cao himself. Thinking that Cao Cao had come to inspect the army in person, he urged his steed forward.

Suddenly a big explosion sounded and at this signal there appeared bodies of armed men from right and left, front and

rear, so that the western men were completely encircled. Ma Teng and his two sons fought valiantly to free themselves from the trap but presently the youngest son was killed by an arrow. Ma Teng and the other son pushed this way and that, but failed on every side. Both were sorely wounded and when their steeds fell from many arrow wounds, both were captured.

Ma Teng, his son, and Huang Kui were brought before Cao Cao. Huang Kui loudly protested his innocence, at which Cao Cao called in the witness Miao Ze.

“You worthless scoundrel! You have spoiled my plan!” cried Ma Teng. “Now I cannot slay the rebel for my country. But it is the will of Heaven.”

Cao Cao ordered them to be taken out to be executed. Ma Teng met his death heroically and never ceased his abuse of the tyrant.

Father and sons share one niche of fame,

For purest loyalty their praise the same.

To their own harm the rebels they withstood,
Content to die to make their pledge good.

In blood the solemn oath they did indite
To slay the wicked and preserve the right.

A distinguished family from the west,
Old general’s name his descendants glorified.

“I desire no other reward than Huang Kui’s concubine as wife,” said Miao Ze.

Cao Cao smiled and said, “For the sake of a woman you have brought your brother-in-law’s whole household to destruction. What good would it be to preserve such a miscreant as you?”

So he ordered the executioners to put both the traitor and the woman to death, as well as the entire Huang household. Those who saw the fearful vengeance sighed at its cruelty.

Cao Cao did not desire to rouse the rancor of the men of the west, so he proclaimed to them: “Ma Teng and his sons rebelled but it has nothing to do with you.” At the same time he sent his men to secure the various passes so that the nephew Ma Dai should not escape.

As has been said, Ma Dai led the rear force. Before long some soldiers from the main army ran back and told him what had occurred at the capital. This frightened him so much that he abandoned his army and fled, disguised as a trader.

Having slain Ma Teng, Cao Cao decided to launch his expedition to the south. But then came the disquieting news of the military preparations of Liu Bei, whose objective was said to be West Chuan. This alarmed him and he said, “If he obtains the west, his wings will be fully grown. How are we going to deal with him?”

From among his counselors there arose one who said, “I have a plan that will prevent Liu Bei and Sun Quan from helping each other and secure for you both the south and the west.”

Chill death has just struck down the heroes of the west,

Disaster will approach the bold men of the south.

Who the speaker was will be disclosed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

Ma Chao Raises an Army for Vengeance

Cao Cao Shaves His Beard and Loses His Robe When Escaping

"What is this good plan of yours?" asked Cao Cao of the speaker, Chen Qun, who was a civil official in his service.

Chen Qun replied, "Your two principal enemies are now firm allies, close as lips and teeth. Now Liu Bei wants to invade West Chuan—if you, sir, send a mighty army, together with your men in Hefei to attack Sun Quan, he will try to seek help from Liu Bei, who, having set his heart on the west, will refuse to assist. Sun Quan, without this aid, will be so weakened that his whole territory will be yours for the taking. That done, Jingzhou will crumble at a tap of a drum. The west will be your next target and the whole empire, yours."

"Those are my very thoughts put into words," replied Cao Cao.

An army of 300,000 men soon set out for the south, while in Hefei Zhang Liao was ordered to prepare grain and forage for the expedition.

Sun Quan speedily heard of the move and called in his advisors. At the council Zhang Zhao said, “You can send someone to Lu Su and tell him to write at once to Liu Bei, asking him for help. They are good friends and Liu Bei will certainly respond favorably. Besides, since Liu Bei is now son-inlaw of Wu, it is his duty to assist us. With the support of Liu Bei there is no danger to our country.”

Sun Quan took this advice and Lu Su was ordered to seek help from Liu Bei. Accordingly, on receiving this command, Lu Su wrote a letter to Liu Bei, who after reading it, retained the messenger at the guesthouse till Zhuge Liang could arrive to get advice from Nanjun. As soon as the advisor returned Liu Bei showed him the letter. The advisor said, “It is not necessary for Wu troops to move, nor for us to send ours. I can prevent Cao Cao from ever daring to look toward the southeast.”

So he wrote a reply, assuring Lu Su that if the northern army approached, he would have a plan to force it back at once.

The messenger took the letter and left. Liu Bei then asked his advisor how he could hope to withstand the huge army that Cao Cao had prepared to bring south.

Zhuge Liang replied, “Cao Cao’s chief fear is Xiliang. Only recently he has slain Ma Teng and his son Ma Chao, who is in command of the men of Xiliang, will be grinding his teeth with rage against Cao Cao. Now you can write and seek an ally in Ma Chao, asking him to march his army toward the capital, and Cao Cao will have no leisure to think of any expedition to the south.”

The letter was duly written and sent by a trusty hand.

Away in Xiliang, one night Ma Chao had a strange dream in which he saw himself lying out on a snowy plain and many tigers were coming up and biting him. He awoke in a fright and wondered what the dream portended. He assembled his officers and told them about the dream.

“This is an ill omen,” answered Pang De, one of his trusted officers.

“What is your interpretation?” asked Ma Chao.

“Meeting with tigers on a snowy plain is a very inauspicious subject to dream about. I fear our old general is in trouble at the capital.”

Almost at the same moment a man came staggering in and cast himself on the ground crying, “Both your father and your brothers are dead.”

It was Ma Dai, and he related how Ma Teng and his two sons came to be slain by Cao Cao and how he had managed to escape in disguise.

Ma Chao, grief-stricken, wept so bitterly that he collapsed to the ground. His officers helped him up. Gritting his teeth, he cursed his enemy Cao Cao.

Soon after, a messenger came with a letter from Liu Bei, which read:

> In these unfortunate days of the Hans, the rebellious and tyrannical Cao Cao monopolizes all power, to the injury of the Emperor and the wretchedness of the people. I, Liu Bei, recall that your noble father and I were recipients of a secret edict, and we swore to exterminate the arch rebel. Now your noble father has suffered death at the hands of Cao Cao and it is your duty to avenge him. You cannot let the same sky cover you and your enemy, nor the same sun shine upon you and your father's murderer. If you can lead your men to attack Cao Cao from the west I will march my armies to assault him from the south. In this way he can be taken and all his evil band exterminated. Then and thus will your father be avenged and the Hans restored. The letter cannot contain all I want to say to you, but I await your reply.

With tears in his eyes, Ma Chao instantly wrote a reply, which was returned by the bearer.

The Xiliang army was then mustered and a day was set for the start. Just then the prefect of the district, Han Sui, sent for Ma Chao, to whom he showed a letter from Cao Cao promising to promote him to be Lord of Xiliang as a reward for sending Ma Chao as a prisoner to the capital.

"Bind me and my cousin now, uncle, and send us to Cao Cao. That will save you the trouble of fighting," said the younger man, prostrating himself.

But Han Sui helped him up, saying, “Your father and I were sworn brothers—do you think I would harm you? I will help you if you are going to fight.”

Ma Chao bowed to express his gratitude. The bearer of Cao Cao’s letter was dragged away and beheaded. Then Han Sui with his eight divisions set out to join Ma Chao, whose officers included Pang De and Ma Dai. The combined force, numbering 200,000 men, set out for the capital. On their march, the first city they had to pass through was Chang’an.

The prefect of that city was Zhong Yao. As soon as he heard what was afoot he dispatched a message to Cao Cao and prepared for defense, leading his force out into the open plain and deploying for battle.

Ma Dai, leader of the van of the Xiliang army, arrived first, pouring his 15,000 men over the countryside like a flood. Zhong Yao rode forward to parley with Ma Dai, but the latter came forward, sword in hand, to attack. After but one bout, the prefect was already worsted and fled. Ma Dai followed in pursuit. Soon the main body of the avengers arrived and they surrounded the city, which Zhong Yao set about defending.

Chang’an had been the capital of West Han and so was well fortified, with a solid wall and a deep moat. The Xiliang army besieged the city for ten days without success. Then Pang De proposed a plan. He said, “The soil in the city is hard and the water bitter with alkali, making it undrinkable. Furthermore, they lack firewood for fuel. Ten days of siege must have exhausted their supplies. So if we withdraw for a time and….” Then he explained the plan to Ma Chao, saying that they would capture the city without having to lift a finger.

“Your plan sounds excellent,” said Ma Chao.

So they sent orders of withdrawal to each division and Ma Chao covered the retreat. The next day, Zhong Yao went up the city walls to look around, and saw that the besiegers had gone. However, suspecting a ruse, he sent out spies, who returned to say the soldiers had really moved far into the distance. Much relieved, he allowed both soldiers and people to go out into the country to cut the urgently-needed firewood and bring in drinking water. The city gates, thrown wide open, were thronged with those passing in and out.

This continued for five days and then they heard that Ma Chao’s army was returning. In panic people rushed into the city and the gates were once more firmly closed.

The officer responsible for the west gate was Zhong Jin, brother of Zhong Yao. At about the third watch of the night, a fire was started just inside the gate and when he hastened there to put it out, a man riding on a horse suddenly turned up from the corner and slashed at him with a sword, crying at the same time, “Here is Pang De!” Taken aback, the officer was slain. The guards were soon disposed of, the gate locks shattered, and the soldiers outside came pouring in. The prefect escaped by the east gate, leaving the city to his enemies. He retreated to Tong Pass, where he again fortified himself and sent news of the defeat to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao threw aside his plan for the expedition to the south when he learned that Chang’an was lost. He at once ordered Cao Hong and Xu Huang, with 10,000 men under their command, to replace the defeated prefect in defending Tong Pass. They were told to hold Tong Pass at all cost for at least

ten days, or they would pay for its loss with their heads. After ten days the pass would be no concern of theirs, for Cao Cao would be there with the main army.

Cao Ren warned him that Cao Hong was hot-tempered and might bungle things. So Cao Ren was ordered to follow them with the supplies.

The two officers made all haste to the pass and took over the command from Zhong Yao. They confined themselves to defense and would not venture out. Ma Chao appeared every day and reviled the three generations of Cao Cao's family, which enraged Cao Hong, who would have led his men out to fight had not his colleague restrained him.

"Ma Chao only wishes to provoke you to go out," said Xu Huang. "Remember our orders and do not fight now. Our lord surely has some master plan."

But the advice was hard to follow, for Ma Chao's men took turns in cursing Cao Cao day and night. And Xu Huang tried his best to prevent his colleague from taking any rash action.

Thus it continued till the ninth day. Then the defenders saw that their enemies had turned all their horses loose and were resting on the grass, many even sleeping as if quite fatigued. So Cao Hong ordered his attendants to get ready his horse and, at the head of 3,000 men, he dashed down to catch the besiegers unprepared. They at once fled, leaving their steeds and throwing aside their weapons. Unable to resist temptation, Cao Hong pursued them.

At this time Xu Huang was checking cartloads of grain and forage; but when he heard what his impulsive colleague had done, he hastily got his men together and went to his rescue. He shouted to Cao Hong to return.

Suddenly a great shouting arose near him and out dashed Ma Dai to attack. Both Cao Hong and Xu Huang turned to flee, but the drums rolled and two bodies of men, led by Ma Chao and Pang De, came out from behind the hills. Then a battle began—but the Xiliang force was too strong for them and most of their men were lost. Cao Hong and his colleague managed to break through and made for the pass. Their enemies came in close pursuit and they had to abandon the pass and flee for their lives. Pang De followed them over the pass, where he was met by Cao Ren, who rescued the defeated men. Pang De returned to the pass with Ma Chao.

Cao Hong hastened to see his master to give him the evil tidings.

"I asked you to hold for ten days, why did you lose the pass on the ninth?" questioned Cao Cao.

"Those men from Xiliang hurled every sort of insult at us," replied Cao Hong. "And when I saw them look unprepared I took the opportunity to rout them, but I fell victim to their trick."

"You are young and impetuous. But, Xu Huang, you ought to know better."

“He would not listen, though I told him many times. And when he went out that day I was taking in stores in another part of the pass. I hastened after him but it was too late.”

Cao Cao was infuriated and ordered Cao Hong to be put to death, but the other officers begged that he might be pardoned. Cao Hong pleaded guilty and finally he was allowed to go unpunished.

Cao Cao advanced to Tong Pass. On arriving he took Cao Ren’s advice of establishing a strong defensive position first before attacking. So trees were felled and a strong stockade was built with three camps. Cao Cao himself occupied the center one.

Soon after, Cao Cao and all his officers in a body rushed to attack the pass. On the way they ran against the Xiliang men. Both sides halted and formed their battle arrays. This done, Cao Cao rode to the central standard, from where he looked at his opponents.

He saw before him a body of fine soldiers, everyone with the bearing of a hero. And the commander, Ma Chao, was of an especially impressive appearance. He had a fair complexion, rouge-red lips, a slender waist, and broad shoulders; his voice was resonant and his strength fierce. He was wearing a white battle robe and silver armor, gripping a long spear as he sat there on his charger. On his two sides were Pang De and Ma Dai.

Cao Cao, admiring him secretly in his heart, urged forward his steed and addressed Ma Chao: “You are descended from a notable general of the Hans. Why do you rebel?”

Ma Chao ground his teeth and cursed Cao Cao vehemently for his betrayal of the Emperor and the court, and above all, for his murder of his father and brothers. “The same sky shall not cover us both, for I will take you captive and sink my teeth in your living flesh!”

With this he set his spear and rode straight at Cao Cao to slay him. He was met by Yu Jin, who rushed forth behind his master, and the two were engaged in battle. After some half score of bouts Yu Jin had to flee. Zhang He, however, took his place and these two exchanged a score of passes. Then Zhang He, too, ran away. Next to challenge was Li Tong. Ma Chao’s martial prowess was now at its height and he made short work of his new opponent, who was thrust down from his horse after a few bouts. At this victory Ma Chao raised his spear to beckon the men behind him to press forward and they swarmed onward, overwhelming their enemies like a flood. Ma Chao and his two aides, with a hundred or so cavalrymen, rode right into the enemy’s center to capture Cao Cao.

They came close. Cao Cao, escaping amid his fleeing men, heard the shout of Xiliang soldiers: “That’s Cao Cao in the red robe!” So he hastily cast away his red robe. Soon after, however, he heard another shout: “That’s he with the long beard!” At once he took his sword and cut short his beard. Yet again some soldiers recognized him and told Ma Chao that Cao Cao had now clipped his beard, and so the cry changed to, “That’s Cao Cao with the short beard!” Hearing this, Cao Cao wrapped the corner of a flag about his neck and jowl and fled.

Panic seized upon the soldiers at Tong Pass;

Frightened, Cao Cao flung off his brocade dress,
And sawed his beard short with a sword.

The fame of Ma Chao rose high to the sky.

As he was fleeing for safety Cao Cao again heard the sound of hoofs and on looking round he found, to his terror, none other than Ma Chao himself coming quite close. His followers were panic-stricken and all fled for their own lives, leaving Cao Cao alone to face his enemy.

"Halt, Cao Cao!" shouted Ma Chao sternly as he drew even nearer.

The whip dropped from Cao Cao's nerveless hand as he heard his enemy coming closer and closer. But just as Ma Chao leveled his spear for a thrust, Cao Cao slipped behind a tree and Ma Chao's spear struck the trunk. He quickly pulled out his spear but the delay gave the fugitive an advantage, although it did not quite free him from pursuit, for Ma Chao was soon again galloping on his trail. At this moment an officer suddenly emerged from behind a slope, who cried, "Do not hurt my lord!"

This was Cao Hong and he whirled his sword at Ma Chao, thus making it possible for Cao Cao to escape. Cao Hong fought Ma Chao for about fifty bouts, when he began to grow weary and his strokes faltered. Luckily for him, Xiahou Yuan appeared with several score others to his rescue and Ma Chao found it prudent to retire as he was greatly outnumbered by his opponents. Xiahou Yuan, too, retreated.

At last Cao Cao returned to his camp. Thanks to Cao Ren, who maintained a firm defense in the camps, the loss of his men had not been too great.

As he sat in his tent Cao Cao said with a sigh, “Had I not spared Cao Hong the other day I would have died at the hands of Ma Chao today.” So he called in his rescuer and rewarded him well. Then he gathered his worsted men and strengthened the camp, deepening the moat and raising the ramparts. Ma Chao came daily to challenge his opponents to combat and to abuse them, but, by the order of Cao Cao, none of his men was to venture out on pain of execution.

“Our enemies use long spears,” said the officers. “We should meet them with bows and crossbows.”

“They may have long spears,” replied Cao Cao, “but battle or no battle depends on my decision. How can they thrust at us if we do not go out? All you have to do is ignore them and they will speedily withdraw.”

The officers wondered. They said to one another, “Our lord used to go foremost in the fight—why has he become so weak after this defeat by Ma Chao?”

Several days later spies reported that Ma Chao had been reinforced by 20,000 Qiang tribesmen. To the surprise of his officers, Cao Cao accepted the news gleefully and they asked him why he was so pleased.

Cao Cao replied, “Wait till I have defeated them and I will explain it to you.”

Three days later there was another report of further reinforcements for Ma Chao, and Cao Cao not only rejoiced but even gave a banquet to celebrate. His officers laughed at him in secret.

Cao Cao said, "You gentlemen laugh because I cannot destroy Ma Chao. Well then, can any one of you propose a plan?"

Xu Huang rose and said, "Sir, you have your entire army here and the enemy forces, too, are all posted on Tong Pass. This means that no soldiers are guarding the west side of the river. If you can get a troop to secretly cross the river and hold the ferry you will be ready to cut off their retreat. When this is done, you can attack them from the north side of the river so that they cannot get reinforcements and must fail."

"Your proposal is just what I think," said Cao Cao.

So Xu Huang and another officer were placed at the head of 4,000 men to march to the west of the river and hide in the valleys. They were to wait till Cao Cao crossed the river to the north, so that they could strike simultaneously.

Then he ordered Cao Hong to prepare boats and rafts at the ferry, while Cao Ren was left to defend the camps. He himself led the force to cross the Wei River.

When Ma Chao heard of this new move by his enemy he at once understood its purpose. "Instead of attacking this pass, Cao Cao is now preparing rafts to cross to the north side of the river, which means he is attempting to cut off my line of retreat. I must lead a troop to hold the north bank, to prevent

him from crossing the river there. If he is held back, his food supply will run short within twenty days and that will result in a mutiny. Then I will attack him from the southern bank."

Here Han Sui had an even better plan. Quoting the military maxim "Striking when troops were half over the river," he suggested that they should attack from the south bank when Cao Cao's army was in the middle of crossing, and his men would perish in the river.

"You are perfectly right, uncle," replied Ma Chao. And he sent spies to find out exactly when Cao Cao's men were going to ford the river.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao's preparations were complete and he divided his army into three parties to move ahead to cross the Wei River. They reached the ferry at the first sign of dawn and the veterans were sent over first to establish a camp. Cao Cao, with his hand on his sword and surrounded by a hundred trusted officers and men, took up position on the south bank to watch the crossing.

Very soon sentinels shouted, "There comes the white-robed general!" All recognized him to be Ma Chao. Terrified, they made a rush to get into the boats and the riverbank became a scene of shouting men struggling to embark. Cao Cao still sat watching and did not stir. Pointing with his sword, he ordered his men to cease their confusion. Meanwhile, noise of the men and horses of the approaching army grew louder and louder. Suddenly an officer jumped ashore from one of the boats and shouted to Cao Cao: "The rebels are close! Get into a boat, sir."

“What does it matter?” replied Cao Cao to the speaker, who was Xu Chu. Glancing back, he saw, however, that Ma Chao was only about a hundred paces from him. Xu Chu laid hold of Cao Cao and dragged him into a boat that had already pushed off and was ten feet from the bank, but Xu Chu took Cao Cao on his back and leaped onboard. The boat was small and in danger of being overturned, so Xu Chu drew his sword to chop away at the hands clinging to the side and the victims fell back into the water.

The boat went downstream, with Xu Chu standing in the prow, poling as hard as he could. His master crouched out of sight at his feet.

Seeing that the boat was already in midstream drifting down with the current, Ma Chao took his bow and began to shoot. He also ordered his brave officers to go along the river and shoot. A shower of arrows soon fell about the boat. Xu Chu, fearing Cao Cao would be wounded, shielded him with a saddle which he held in his left hand. Ma Chao was an excellent archer and with every arrow a victim fell in the boat. In a short while scores of them were hit and tumbled overboard, leaving the boat out of control and whirling in the swift current. Xu Chu straddled over the tiller and tried to guide the boat while he poled with one hand and held the protecting saddle over Cao Cao’s head with the other.

At that moment the magistrate of Weinan, named Ding Fei, who from a hilltop saw how dangerous the situation was for Cao Cao, drove out from his camp all the cattle and horses. In no time the hillside became a scene of loose animals. This was too much for the Xiliang soldiers, who were born

herdsmen. At sight of the beasts, they left the river and ran off to secure them, forgetting all about the pursuit of their enemy.

And so Cao Cao escaped. As soon as he reached the northern shore the boat was scuttled. When the other officers learned that their master had been in peril on the river they hastened to his aid, but by the time they came he was already safe onshore. Xu Chu's heavy armor was stuck full of arrows. The officers escorted Cao Cao back to the camp where, kneeling on the ground, they hoped that he had not suffered seriously.

"The rebels very nearly caught me today," he said smiling.

"They would have got across the river if someone had not turned out the cattle and horses to distract them," said Xu Chu.

"Who was that person?" asked Cao Cao.

Someone who knew told him. Before long the magistrate came in to pay his respects and Cao Cao thanked him.

"I should have been a prisoner but for your clever plan," he said. And the magistrate was given a post in the army.

"Though they have gone, they will assuredly return tomorrow," said the magistrate. "You must prepare to repel them."

"My preparations are all made."

Cao Cao ordered his officers to spread themselves along the riverbank and dig tunnels as temporary shelters. If they saw

the enemy approaching they were to lead their men outside the tunnel but create an impression of occupation by placing ensigns around. Along the river they were to dig ditches, which were to be hidden from sight by putting some boards and loose soil over them. After that, they were to entice the enemy there, who would stumble into the pits and fall easy victims.

Ma Chao returned to tell Han Sui how he had nearly captured Cao Cao, but a certain bold officer had carried Cao Cao on his back and leaped with him into a boat.

Han Sui replied, "I have heard that Cao Cao's personal guards were the bravest and strongest soldiers under the command of Dian Wei and Xu Chu. They are called the Tiger Guards. As Dian Wei is dead, the man you saw must have been Xu Chu. He is both brave and powerful and goes by the name of Mad Tiger. Do be careful when you meet him."

"I know his name, too," said Ma Chao.

"Cao Cao now means to attack our rear," continued Han Sui. "Let us attack first, before he can establish camps and stockades. Once he is encamped it will be difficult to dislodge him."

"My idea is that we should hold the north bank and prevent him from crossing the river."

"What about you keeping guard here while I go and fight Cao Cao?"

"If you go, take Pang De with you," said Ma Chao.

So Han Sui and Pang De, with 50,000 men, went down to the river. Cao Cao at once ordered his officers to take up positions by the sides of the tunnel to draw the enemy there. Pang De was ahead with a goodly squadron of ironclad horsemen and they charged along at full speed. Then there arose a confused shouting as they all went plunging into the pits prepared for them. Pang De mustered all his strength and soon leaped out onto the level ground, slew several men around and thus, even without his steed he struggled his way out of the thick of the fight.

But Han Sui was surrounded by that time and Pang De went on foot to aid him. On the way he met an enemy officer, whom he slew with one thrust. Then, mounting the dead man's steed, he rode forward fiercely and saved Han Sui, leaving a trail of blood as he passed. The men of Cao Cao pursued him, but were driven off by reinforcement forces led by Ma Zhao, who also rescued a great number of Han Sui's men. The battle continued till evening, when they withdrew. Back at the pass, Ma Chao and Han Sui mustered their men together and found that they had lost two officers and more than two hundred men, who were killed when they fell into the pits.

The two commanders discussed what their next move should be. "If we give the enemy time, he will set up strong fortifications on the north bank," said Ma Chao. "I think it is better to raid his camp tonight with a light force."

"We must divide our force into two so that we can support each other," said Han Sui.

So it was decided that Ma Chao was to lead the striking force, with Pang De and Ma Dai as supports. They would set out at nightfall.

At the same time Cao Cao was also maneuvering on the north bank of the river. He called forth his officers to whom he said, "Our enemy is sure to launch a raid on us tonight, for they think we have not yet set up stockades and are therefore more vulnerable. I want you to place your men in ambush all around, leaving the center unoccupied. At the signal of a loud explosion, fall upon the raiders, who can then be captured without difficulty."

However, at nightfall Ma Chao first sent out a small scouting party of thirty riders who presently arrived at Cao Cao's position. Seeing no soldiers around, they penetrated into the center of the enemy's lines. At once the signal was given. Out leapt the hidden men on all sides only to surround a meager force of thirty soldiers. The leader of the scouting party was soon slain. However, their main force in three divisions led by Ma Chao, Pang De, and Ma Dai came dashing up to meet their foe.

Plan an ambush to meet your foe you may,

Warriors who strive to win are not to be tamed.

Which side would win the battle will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

Xu Chu Strips for a Fight with Ma Chao

Cao Cao Sows Dissension Between Ma Chao and Han Sui

The fight between Ma Chao and Cao Cao lasted till morning, when each side drew off. Ma Chao camped by the river, from where he kept up harassing attacks on his enemy, day and night. Cao Cao, stationed on the north bank, began to construct three floating bridges with rafts and chains so as to facilitate communication with the south bank, while Cao Ren established a camp on the river, which he barricaded with his carts and wagons.

When Ma Chao was informed of this new development, he had each of his men carry a bundle of grass and a torch. Then together with Han Sui he advanced to Cao Cao's position, where the soldiers were told to pile up the grass and kindle it, and soon there was a raging fire all around. Unable to withstand the heat, Cao Cao's men had to abandon their position and flee. All the wagons and the floating bridges were destroyed in the fire. It was a great victory for the Xiliang army and gave them the command of the Wei River.

Cao Cao was worried at the failure to build a strong camp and fearful of his defenselessness. Then Xun You proposed building a mud wall, using the sandy soil by the river. So

30,000 soldiers were assigned to carry soil and set up a mud rampart. Seeing this, Ma Chao sent his two trusted officers with five hundred riders to perpetually harass the workmen, so that the job progressed very slowly. Besides, the sandy soil was not compact enough and the wall would not hold, but collapsed in the same breath as it was built. Cao Cao felt that he was at the end of his tether.

The time was the end of the ninth month and the frigid cold weather was just coming on. The sky was overcast day after day. As Cao Cao sat in his tent, feeling much disheartened, an old man came to see him and to offer some advice. He was a very superior-looking man who gave his name as Lou Zibo, and said that he came from Jingzhao. He was a recluse and a Taoist, his religious name being Meng Mei, or "Dreaming of Plums." Cao Cao received him with great courtesy and presently the venerable old man began: "Sir, you have long been striving to make a camp on the river. Now is your opportunity—why not begin?"

"The soil is too sandy to stick together," said Cao Cao. "Have you some other plan to propose?"

"You are a great commander, sir. You surely know the times and seasons. It has been overcast for many days and these clouds foretell a north wind and intense cold. When the wind begins to blow you should hurry your men to carry up the earth and sprinkle it with water. By dawn your wall will be complete."

Cao Cao seized upon this advice. He offered his aged visitor a reward, but the man would not accept anything.

That night the north wind swept in at full force. Every one of his men was driven to carrying earth and wetting it. As they had no other means of carrying water they made bags that they filled with water and then poured on the earth. And so as they piled the earth they froze it solid with water, and by dawn the wall, standing firm, was completed.

Spies told Ma Chao that the enemy had built a wall and he rode out to see it. He was greatly perplexed at the sight and began to suspect help from the gods.

However, the next day amid loud beating of drums, he marched out his whole army for a major attack. Cao Cao himself rode out of the camp, with only the redoubtable Xu Chu in attendance, and advanced toward his young opponent. Flourishing his whip he called out: “I am here alone and I want Ma Chao to come out to speak with me.”

So Ma Chao rode out, his spear set ready to thrust.

“You thought that I would be unable to build a camp, but look! in one single night, I have my stockade readily constructed. Why do you not surrender?”

Ma Chao was so enraged that he almost rushed at Cao Cao, but he was not too angry to fail to notice the henchman behind his enemy, glowering at him with a gleaming sword in his grip. Suspecting this man to be Xu Chu, he flourished his whip and asked, “I hear you have a man called Lord Tiger in your army. Where is he?”

At this Xu Chu lifted his sword and roared, “I am Xu Chu of Qiaojun!” His eyes gleamed fiercely and his whole being was

so powerful that Ma Chao dared not move. He turned his steed and retired.

Cao Cao and his doughty follower also returned to their camp. The two armies witnessed this confrontation, and there was not a man there but felt a quiver of fear.

“They, too, know that Xu Chu is Lord Tiger,” said Cao Cao to his officers when he returned.

And thereafter Xu Chu came to be known by that name.

“I will capture that fellow Ma Chao tomorrow,” said Xu Chu.

“Ma Chao is very bold,” said his master. “Be careful.”

“I swear to fight him to death,” said Xu Chu.

Then he sent a written challenge to his enemy with the words, “Lord Tiger dares Ma Chao to a decisive duel on the morrow.”

Ma Chao was very angry when he received this. “How dare he insult me so?” he cried. Then he wrote underneath the challenge his reply: “I vow to slay Mad Tiger on the morrow.”

The next day both armies moved out and arrayed in battle formations. Pang De and Ma Dai took command of the two wings, while Han Sui held the center. Ma Chao took up his position in front and called, “Come out, Mad Tiger!”

Cao Cao, who was on horseback by the standard, turned and said: “He is as bold as Lu Bu.”

Xu Chu rode forth whirling his sword and the duel began. They fought over a hundred bouts and neither could prevail over the other. But then, as their steeds were quite spent with so much galloping to and fro, each withdrew to his own side to obtain a fresh horse. The contest was renewed and a hundred further encounters took place, still without victory to either warrior.

Suddenly Xu Chu galloped back to his own side, stripped off his armor, showing his bulging muscles and, naked as he was, leaped again into the saddle and rode out to continue the battle.

Again the champions engaged, while both armies stood aghast. Thirty bouts more, and Xu Chu, summoning up all his force, raised high his sword and then brought it down heavily on his opponent. Ma Chao dodged, set his spear directly at his opponent’s heart, and thrust. Discarding his sword, Xu Chu caught the spear in his hands. Then ensued a struggle for the spear. Xu Chu, being a man of mighty strength, snapped the shaft so that each held one half of the spear. And the duel continued, each belaboring the other with the broken piece of the weapon.

At this point Cao Cao, for fear lest his champion might suffer, ordered two of his officers to go forth and help. Seeing this, Pang De and Ma Dai led their armored horsemen out to attack. They dashed ferociously into the enemy formation. A melee began in which Cao Cao’s men were worsted and Xu Chu received two arrow wounds in the shoulder. So they

retreated to their stockade, Ma Chao following them to the river. In this battle a great majority of Cao Cao's men were either wounded or killed.

Cao Cao barred his gates and allowed none to go out. Ma Chao went back and said to Han Sui, "I have seen some terrible fighters, but none to match Xu Chu. He is aptly nicknamed Mad Tiger."

Thinking that by strategy he might get the better of Ma Chao, Cao Cao secretly sent a troop led by Xu Huang across the river to take up position on the west bank so that he might attack his foe from both the front and the rear.

One day from his rampart, Cao Cao saw Ma Chao and several hundred horsemen ride close up to the walls and then gallop to and fro like the wind. After gazing at them for a long time he tore off his helmet and dashed it to the ground, saying, "If that Ma Chao is not killed, I will die without even a burying ground!"

Xiahou Yuan heard him and his heart burned within him. He cried, "May I die here at once if I do not destroy that rebel!"

Without more ado he flung open the gates and rode out with his thousand of men. Cao Cao tried to stop this mad rush but without success—so fearing his general might come to grief, he rode out after him. At the sight of Cao Cao's men, Ma Chao spread his men out in a line. As Xiahou Yuan approached, Ma Chao dashed forward to draw him into the fight. Then noticing Cao Cao himself in the distance, he abandoned Xiahou Yuan and rode straight toward Cao Cao.

Panic seized Cao Cao and he fled for his life, while his men were thrown into confusion.

It was during this pursuit that Ma Chao was told of Xu Huang encamping on the west bank of the river. Realizing the danger this meant for him he gave up the pursuit, called back his men and went to his own camp, there to consult Han Sui.

"Cao Cao has crossed the river and we can be attacked both in the front and rear," said Ma Chao. "What are we to do?"

One of Han Sui's officers, named Li Kan, said, "It is better to sacrifice some territory and make a peace agreement so that both sides can stop the fighting for the time being. Wait until winter is over. Chances may come with the spring weather."

"He is right," said Han Sui. "I think we should do as he suggested."

But Ma Chao hesitated. Two other officers of Han Sui's also exhorted him to make peace and at length he agreed. So Yang Qiu was sent as messenger of peace to the camp of Cao Cao.

"You may return—I will send my reply over soon," said Cao Cao after learning the purport of his mission. And Yang Qiu left.

The advisor Jia Xu went in to see Cao Cao and asked, "What do you think of this, sir?"

"What is your opinion?" asked Cao Cao.

“War allows deceit. I think we can pretend to agree. Then try to sow dissension between Han Sui and Ma Chao and both can be destroyed at one tap of the drum.”

Cao Cao clapped his hands for joy. “Best minds often agree. I have just been thinking of that.”

So to Ma Chao’s peace offer was returned an answer which said: “Let me gradually withdraw my soldiers and I will give back the land belonging to you on the west of the river.” At the same time Cao Cao ordered the construction of a floating bridge to put up a show of planning a withdrawal.

When the reply arrived, Ma Chao said to Han Sui, “Although he agrees to peace, yet it is difficult to know his real intention, for he is evil and crafty. We must remain prepared against his machinations. Uncle, let us take turns in watching Cao Cao and Xu Huang on alternate days. Only thus will we be safe against his treachery.”

Han Sui agreed and each of them alternated in keeping a close watch on Cao Cao’s camp and on Xu Huang’s position on the west bank of the river. Soon Cao Cao was informed of what his enemies were doing. He turned to Jia Xu and said, “My plan is going to work!”

Then he asked his guards, “Who keeps the lookout on this side tomorrow?”

“Han Sui.”

The next day Cao Cao, at the head of a large party of his officers, rode out of the camp and the officers presently

spread out on his right and left, he himself remaining a solitary rider visible in the center. As many of Han Sui's men did not know Cao Cao by sight they came forth to have a good look of him. Cao Cao called out, "Do any of you soldiers want to see Cao Cao? Here I am. I am also a man like yourselves, not someone with four eyes or a couple of mouths, only I am more resourceful."

The soldiers turned pale with fright. Then Cao Cao sent out a man to say to Han Sui, "Sir, the prime minister humbly asks you to come and confer with him." So Han Sui went out and, seeing Cao Cao wore no armor, he also threw offhis and rode out alone, clad in a light robe. Each rode up to the other till their horse's heads nearly touched and there they started talking.

Cao Cao said first, "Your father and I were recommended to be officials at the same time and I used to regard him as an uncle. Later you and I were also colleagues in court. But that was a long time ago. May I ask how old you are now, General?"

"I am forty already," replied Han Sui.

"Why, we were both so young in those days at the capital. How quickly middle age has crept up on us! If we could only restore tranquillity to the country, then we would have a joyful time together."

After that he chatted about old times, without mentioning a word on military matters, but laughing heartily. They talked for a couple of hours before they took leave of each other.

Ma Chao soon heard of this meeting and he hastened over to his ally to ask about the details.

“What did Cao Cao say to you today?” he asked.

“He just recalled the old days when we were together in the capital,” replied Han Sui.

“How could he say nothing about military matters?”

“Well, he did not breathe a word—and I could not talk about them alone.”

Ma Chao, full of suspicion, went away without another word.

When Cao Cao returned to his camp he said to Jia Xu, “Do you know why I talked with him like that publicly?”

“It may be an excellent idea,” said Jia Xu, “but it is not sufficient to estrange those two people. I can improve on it and we will make them quarrel and even kill each other.”

“What is your scheme?”

“Ma Chao is brave but not astute. You can write a letter in your own hand to Han Sui alone. Include some ambiguous statements, blot out the key points, and write something else. Then send it to Han Sui, taking care that Ma Chao will know about it. He will demand to read the letter, and when he sees that the important parts of the letter have been blotted out and changed, he will suspect that it is Han Sui who has made the changes lest his secrets should leak out. This will remind him of the private talk you had with Han Sui today and his

suspicion will grow so intense that it will bring about trouble. I can secretly corrupt some of Han Sui's subordinates and get them to widen the breach between the two. In this way we can settle Ma Chao."

"This is excellent," said Cao Cao, and he wrote the letter as suggested, with the crossouts and alterations, after which he sealed it securely and deliberately sent quite a few of his attendants to deliver it across to Han Sui.

Sure enough, someone told Ma Chao about the letter, which increased his doubts, and he came to Han Sui's quarters to ask to see it. Han Sui gave it to him and the deletions and alterations struck Ma Chao at once.

"Why are all these alterations here?" he asked.

"It came like that—I do not know."

"Can anyone send a rough draft like this? It seems to me, uncle, that you have changed the wording lest I should know the details."

"It must be that Cao Cao has sealed up the rough draft by mistake."

"I do not think so. He is a shrewd man and would not make such a mistake. You and I, uncle, have been allies in our effort to slay the rebel—why are you turning against me now?"

"If you doubt my word I will tell you what you can do. Tomorrow, in front of the two armies, I will get Cao Cao to

come out and talk and you can take him by surprise. Just rush out and pierce him to death."

"If that is so, I will know that you are true, uncle."

Thus arranged, the next day Han Sui with five officers in his train, rode to the front, while Ma Chao concealed himself behind the great standard. Han Sui sent someone over to say that he wished to speak to the prime minister.

Cao Cao commanded Cao Hong to ride straight to Han Sui. When he was a few paces away from Han Sui, Cao Hong saluted and said, loudly enough to be heard plainly, "Remember what the prime minister wrote to you last night, General. There must be no mistake." Then without another word he rode away.

Ma Chao had heard his words. In a fury he gripped his spear and galloped out to slay his ally in arms. But the five officers checked him and persuaded him to go back to camp.

Han Sui said, "Trust me, good nephew. I really have no evil intentions."

But Ma Chao would not be convinced. Burning with rage he went away. Han Sui discussed the matter with his five officers.

"How can this be cleared up?"

"Ma Chao trusts too much to his own strength," said Yang Qiu. "He is often inclined to bully you, sir. Even if we overcome Cao Cao, do you think he will give way to you? To

my humble mind you should rather think of your own interests. Go over to Prime Minister Cao's side and you will surely get a title of honor one day."

"His father was my pledged brother and I cannot bear to desert him," said Han Sui.

"But as things are now, you simply have to."

"Then who will act as go-between?" asked Han Sui.

"I will," volunteered Yang Qiu.

Then Han Sui wrote a secret letter which he confided to Yang Qiu, who soon found his way over to the other camp. Cao Cao was only too pleased, and he promised that Han Sui would be made Lord of Xiliang, Yang Qiu its prefect, and all the others would also be rewarded in certain ways. It was then agreed that a fire was to be raised in Han Sui's camp as a signal to do away with Ma Chao.

Yang Qiu went back and related all this to his chief and Han Sui felt elated at this initial success. A lot of wood was collected at the back of his tent ready for the signal blaze, and the five officers stood fully armed, ready for the foul deed. They also discussed if they should try to persuade Ma Chao to come to a banquet at their camp and there slay him, but Han Sui hesitated.

However, by then news of the plot had already reached Ma Chao. He resolved to act first. Leaving Ma Dai and Pang De in reserve, he chose a few trusted men and stole into Han Sui's tent, where he found Han Sui and his five confederates

deep in conversation. He heard Yang Qiu saying, “We must not delay, now is the time.”

Then in burst Ma Chao, sword in hand. “You herd of traitors!” he yelled in wrath. “How dare you plot against me?”

They were startled. Ma Chao sprang at Han Sui and slashed at his face. Han Sui put up his hand to ward off the blow and his left hand was instantly cut off. The five officers all drew their swords to fight against Ma Chao. The young man strode outside, followed by the five, who surrounded him, but were kept at bay by Ma Chao’s wonderful swordsmanship. And as his sword flashed, the blood of his victims flowed. Soon, one of the five was down and a second slain—then the other three fled.

Ma Chao ran back into the tent to finish Han Sui, but attendants had removed the wounded man. At this moment the signal fire was lit at the back of the tent, and soon there was commotion all through the camp. Ma Chao hastened to mount. He was presently joined by Pang De and Ma Dai, and the real fight began. Cao Cao’s men, in four divisions, poured in from all sides, while the Xiliang men fought with each other.

Later, losing sight of his two companions, Ma Chao and a hundred others halted at the head of the bridge over the Wei River. At dawn he spotted Li Kan, one of Han Sui’s five officers, coming over the bridge with a troop. Ma Chao set his spear and rode at him full tilt. Li Kan fled, dragging his spear along. At this point one of Cao Cao’s officers came up in pursuit of Ma Chao. But afraid to draw too near to him, he sent an arrow flying instead. Hearing the twang of the

bowstring Ma Chao dodged the arrow, which flew on and killed Li Kan. Ma Chao turned to attack his pursuer, who galloped away. Then Ma Chao returned and re-took possession of the bridge.

Quickly Cao Cao's four divisions arrived, preceded by the fiercest among them, the Tiger Guards, who shot flights of arrows at Ma Chao. Whirling his spear, Ma Chao warded them all off so that they fell one after another to the ground. Ma Chao ordered his men to ride to and fro to seek a breakthrough, but the enemy lines were too thick to penetrate. At this, Ma Chao, with a loud cry, dashed into the enemy formation himself, but his followers were all held back. Alone he kept on fighting desperately for a way out, till his horse was hit by a crossbow bolt and he fell. As he lay on the ground, his enemies pressed in on him. But at the critical moment a troop came in from the northwest and rescued him. Pang De and Ma Dai had come up in the very nick of time.

Thus Ma Chao was rescued and they set him on one of the soldiers' horses and he again took up the fight. Leaving a trail of blood in his wake, he escaped toward the northwest.

Hearing that his enemy had got away, Cao Cao ordered his officers to pursue him day and night and offered rich rewards for capturing Ma Chao dead or alive. For his head the reward was a thousand taels of gold and the lordship of a fief of many people. If anyone captured Ma Chao, the reward was the rank of a high-level general. Consequently the pursuit was warm as everyone was anxious to win renown and reward. Meanwhile, careless of all but flight Ma Chao galloped on and one by one his followers dropped by the way. The retainers who were unable to keep up were mostly captured.

In the end only about thirty riders, Pang De and Ma Dai among them, traveled with him on a westward-bound journey.

Cao Cao in person joined the pursuit and got as far as Anding, but after learning that Ma Chao was far in advance he gave up and returned. Gradually the officers did the same, all coming back to Chang'an. Han Sui, with the loss of his left hand, was reduced to an invalid, but he was rewarded with the marquisdom and his two remaining officers, the other three being slain, were given rank and office.

Then orders were given to lead the whole army back to the capital. Yang Fu, a military officer of rank in Liangzhou, came to Chang'an to point out the danger of withdrawal. "Ma Chao has the valor of Lu Bu and the support of the Qiang people. Unless you destroy him this time he will grow stronger, and the whole of this district will be lost for the government. Pray do not withdraw your army, sir."

Cao Cao said, "I would be quite willing to stay and hunt him down but there is much to do in the capital and the south is still to conquer. So I cannot remain. I want you, sir, to secure this country for me." Yang Fu accepted the order. He then recommended to Cao Cao a man called Wei Kang, who was made Governor of Liangzhou. Both of them were to hold an army in Jicheng against Ma Chao. Just before Yang Fu left, he asked Cao Cao to leave a strong reserve force in Chang'an in case of emergency.

"That has already been seen to," replied Cao Cao.

With this assurance Yang Fu took his leave and went away.

Although Ma Chao was driven away, the tactics that Cao Cao used to worst him remained a mystery to his officers. They asked him to explain his recent strategy. “Why didn’t you attack him first from the east bank instead of wrestling with him at Tong Pass? Why did you wait for so long before you crossed to the north bank and erected camps?”

Cao Cao replied, “The rebels first held Tong Pass. Had I at once taken the east the rebels would have divided their forces to defend all the ferries, and I would never have the chance to cross the river from the west bank. So I massed men against Tong Pass to make the rebels concentrate their defense on the south. As a result, the west was left open. Thus Xu Huang could cross over. Later I crossed over to the north, where I ordered the soldiers to build floating bridges, dig tunnels, and erect mud walls. All this was to give our enemy a false impression that I was weak and thus embolden them up to the point of neglecting their defense. Then by using the clever device of sowing dissension among them I was able, in one day, to destroy the combined energy of all their forces. It was as fast as ‘a thunder clap before you could cover your ears’. You see, the variations of the art of war are infinite.”

“But there is still one more thing that puzzled us,” said the officers. “When you heard the enemy was reinforced you seemed to grow happier. Why was that?”

“Because the western regions were remote and if all these rebels had taken advantage of defensible points and held them, they could not have been quelled in less than a couple of years. When they assembled together they seemed to make a formidable multitude—but they were not unanimous in their outlook. They easily quarreled and, disunited, were easily

overcome. So I had reason to rejoice when they came altogether."

"Indeed, no one can equal you in strategy," said his officers, bowing low before him.

"Well, remember that I rely on you, too," said Cao Cao.

Then he issued substantial rewards to the army and appointed Xiahou Yuan commander at Chang'an. The soldiers who had surrendered were distributed among the various troops. Xiahou Yuan recommended a local man called Zhang Ji to defend the city with him.

So the army returned to the capital, where it was welcomed by the Emperor in his royal chariot. As a reward for his service, Cao Cao was given the three court privileges of not announcing his name when being received by the Emperor, of proceeding to court at a leisurely pace, and of ascending the audience hall armed and booted. These were the privileges that were once enjoyed by Xiao He,* the Han prime minister of old. From then on his prestige extended far and wide.

The fame of these doings penetrated west into Hanzhong, and one of the first to be moved to alarm was Zhang Lu, Prefect of Hanning. This Zhang Lu was the grandson of a Taoist, called Zhang Ling. A long time ago, Zhang Ling had retired to Mount Huming, in West Chuan, where he had composed a work on Taoism for the purpose of deluding the multitude.

Yet all the people respected him, and when he died his son, Zhang Heng, carried on his work, and taught the same

doctrines. Disciples had to pay a fee of five measures of rice, so Zhang Heng came to be known as the Rice Thief.

Zhang Lu, his son, styled himself Master Superior and his disciples were called commonly "devil soldiers." A headman was called Libationer and those who had a large following were called Chief Libationers. Perfect sincerity was then made the ruling tenet of the cult and no deceit was permitted. When anyone fell ill an altar was set up and the invalid was taken into the Room of Silence, where he was to reflect upon his sins and make an open confession. Then he was prayed for. The leading prayer was called Libation Superintendent.

When praying for a sick person they wrote his name on a slip of paper, expressed his willingness to renounce his sin, and made three copies of what was called "The writing of the Three Officers." One copy was placed on the mountain top as a means of informing Heaven; another was buried underground to inform Earth; and the third was sunk in water to tell the Controller of the Waters. If the sick person recovered he was to pay as fee five measures of rice.

Zhang Lu also built public houses of charity in which the poor found rice, meat, and means of cooking. Any wayfarer was allowed to take of these according to the measure of his appetite. However, those who took in excess would invite punishment from on high. Offenses were pardoned thrice—afterwards, offenders were punished. There were no officials but all were subject to the control of the Libationers.

This sort of cult had been practiced in Hanzhong for some thirty years and had escaped repression so far because of the remoteness of the district. Later the court appointed Zhang Lu

Prefect of Hanning so as to secure from him a full quota of tribute.

When reports of Cao Cao's victory over the Xiliang men and his rising prestige reached him, Zhang Lu assembled his men for consultation. He said, "Ma Teng is slain and his son Ma Chao has recently been defeated. I fear our region will be the next to be invaded by Cao Cao. I think I should assume the title of King of Hanning and oversee the defense. What do you say to this?"

In reply, Yan Pu said, "Our province is blessed by a large population of many households, ample supplies, and naturally defensible positions. With the recent setback of Ma Chao, we are even more strengthened by the inrush of numerous fugitives from Xiliang, who have escaped from the Meridian Valley into our region. As Liu Zhang of Yizhou is weak, my humble advice is that you should take possession of the forty-one towns of West Chuan first to establish a solid base for your kingdom. Then consider styling yourself King of Hanning."

This speech greatly pleased Zhang Lu, who then began to devise measures with his brother to raise an army.

News of the movement soon traveled further west. Now the Governor of Yizhou was Liu Zhang, a son of Liu Yan and a descendant from a prince of the imperial house. The prince had been given his fief in Jingling many generations ago and the family had settled there. Later, Liu Yan became ruler of Yizhou, and when he died of illness in due course, his son was recommended for the vacant governorship of Yizhou. There was enmity between Liu Zhang and Zhang Lu because

Zhang Lu's mother and brother had died at the hands of the governor. To protect himself against his foe, Liu Zhang had appointed Pang Xi commander of Baxi, a place not too far from Hanzhong.

When he learned of the impending invasion, Pang Xi immediately dispatched the news to Liu Zhang who, a weakling by nature, was seized by anxiety and fear and he hastily called in his advisors.

At the council a man stood up and said bravely, "Sir, do not be alarmed. I am no genius but with my little tongue I will make Zhang Lu afraid even to look our away."

When plots did grow in the west,

It suited Liu Bei's plans the best.

The speaker's name will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* Prime minister to the founder of Han.

CHAPTER SIXTY

Zhang Song Turns the Tables on Yang Xiu

Pang Tong Advises Liu Bei to Seize the West

The bold speaker was called Zhang Song, who held the office of Bi Jia, an important civil position, in Yizhou. His appearance was grotesque. He had a pointed head and a broad forehead like a countryman's hoe. His nose was flat and his teeth protruded. He was a dwarf in stature but had a voice like a huge bell.

"What proposal do you have that may avert this danger?" asked Liu Zhang.

"My proposal is that we gain the support of Cao Cao. As we know, he has made a clean sweep of the entire country. Lu Bu went first and both the Yuans followed, all exterminated. Lately he has destroyed Ma Chao. In short he is the one man against whom no one can stand. Therefore, my lord, prepare me some valuable gifts to take to the capital and I will persuade Cao Cao to send an expedition to take Hanzhong, which will keep this Zhang Lu, occupied and we will be left in peace."

This pleased Liu Zhang very much and so he prepared gold and pearls and rich stuffs, all valuable presents to be

presented to the man of power. And when these were ready he appointed Zhang Song as his emissary. Zhang Song, however, secretly drew maps of the western regions and took these with him, well-concealed among his things, to the capital. He was accompanied by a small escort.

News of this soon got to Jingzhou and Zhuge Liang sent a trusty person to the capital to keep him informed of Zhang Song's visit.

Zhang Song arrived in the capital and, after finding lodging for himself, he paid daily visits to the prime minister's residence to try to obtain an interview. But his last victory over Ma Chao had filled Cao Cao with insufferable conceit and he indulged himself in drinking and feasting. As he seldom went out, state affairs were administered in his own residence. So Zhang Song had to wait for three days before he was able to send in his name. But even then he had to bribe those who were close attendants of the prime minister to obtain an audience.

Cao Cao was seated in the high place, and after his visitor had made his obeisance, asked, "Your master Liu Zhang has sent no tribute for several years running. Why is that?"

"Because the roads are infested with thieves and robbers, unable to pass through."

Cao Cao interrupted in a loud, harsh voice, "What thieves and robbers can there be when I have cleansed the country?"

"How can you say the land is peaceful when one sees Sun Quan in the south, Zhang Lu in the north, Liu Bei in the

west—and even the weakest of them has an army of several hundred thousand?"

The mean appearance of the emissary had displeased Cao Cao from the outset, and when he heard these blunt words he rose angrily with a flick of his sleeves and left the hall. Those in attendance were annoyed with Zhang Song and said, "How can you behave so rudely when you come on a mission? Your whole attitude was blunt and outrageous. Fortunately for you, our lord remembered you had come from afar and did not punish you for your fault. The best thing for you to do now is to go back as quickly as you can."

Zhang Song only smiled. "We have no servile flatterers and glib talkers in our western country," he said.

At this, a man from below the steps called out in a stern voice, "If you have no such people, can there be any here?"

Zhang Song looked at the speaker and found him to be a man with thin delicate eyebrows and small eyes set in a pale, spiritual face. Zhang Song asked the speaker his name and was told that he was Yang Xiu, son of the loyal Han minister Yang Biao. The young man was then employed in the commissariat of the prime minister. Well-read, intelligent, and eloquent he had the reputation of being clever and controversial. Zhang Song, who was aware of this, had a strong desire to challenge his rival, whereas Yang Xiu, proud of his own ability, was contemptuous of all other scholars. Perceiving the ridicule in Zhang Song's speech, Yang Xiu invited him out to the library, where they could talk more freely.

After settling down in their respective seats as host and guest, Yang Xiu said, "The roads in the west are tortuous and precipitous. You must be quite weary after such a journey."

"At my lord's command I will not flinch, even if I need to go through fire or water," replied Zhang Song.

"What sort of a country is this land of Shu?"

"Shu is the name for the group of districts known of old as Yizhou. The land is magnificent. It offers such splendid scenery as the Jing River and the Sword Pavilion. The land is also extensive. To travel back and forth through the country takes over two hundred and eighty days and the entire area measures 30,000 square li. The population is so dense that one can hear the crowing of cocks and the barking of dogs in his neighbor's house. The soil is so rich and well-cultivated that droughts or famines are virtually unknown. Prosperity is general and the music of pipes and strings constantly greets the ear. The produce of the fields is piled mountain high. There is no place its equal."

"But what of the people?"

"In liberal arts, the land has hailed such talents as Sima Xiangru;* in military arts, the brave Ma Yuan;† in medicine, the capable Zhang Ji;‡ in astrology, the profound Yan Zun.§ We have more outstanding figures from so many walks of life than I can enumerate. How should I ever finish telling of them?"

"And how many equal to your ability are there in the service of your master?"

“Able men number about a hundred, all of them wise, bold, loyal, and magnanimous, well-versed in both civil and military arts. As for poor simpletons like myself, there are cartloads of them, bushels of them, too numerous to count.”

“What office do you hold, then?”

Zhang Song replied, “I am assuming the office of Bi Jia, but in fact I am quite unfit for the job. But, sir, may I inquire what post you hold in the government?”

“I am Zhu Bo (first secretary) in the residence of the prime minister,” replied Yang.

“I have known for long that members of your family held important offices in the government for many generations. Why then, sir, are you not in court service assisting the Emperor, instead of filling the post of a mere clerk in the house of the prime minister?” asked Zhang Song.

Yang Xiu’s face flushed with shame at this rebuke, and he replied lamely, “Though I am among the minor officials, yet my duties are of great importance and I am gaining a great deal of experience under the prime minister’s constant guidance. I hold the office in order to train.”

Zhang Song smiled. “If what I have heard is true, Cao Cao’s academic learning does not penetrate into the essence of the teachings of Confucius or Mencius, nor does his military skill attain the art of the strategists Sun Wu or Wu Qi. All he is good at is using brute force to acquire high position for himself. I do not see how he can give you any valuable instruction to enlighten your understanding.”

“Ah, sir, you live in too remote a region to know of the magnificent talents of the prime minister. But I will show you something.”

Yang Xiu called up an attendant and told him to bring a book from a certain case. He showed this to his guest, who read the title New Book of Meng-de. Then he opened it and read it through from the beginning to the end, the whole thirteen chapters. They all dealt with the art of war.

“What do you think this book is?” asked Zhang Song, when he had finished reading it.

“This is the prime minister’s discussions of the art of ancient and modern war written after the model of Sun Tzu’s Thirteen Treatises. You despised the prime minister for having no talent but will this not go down to posterity?”

“This book! Every child in Shu knows this by heart. What do you mean by calling it a new book? It was written by some obscure person of the time of the Warring States (475–221 B.C.) and Cao Cao has plagiarized it. But he can deceive no one but you, sir!”

“This book is well-concealed inside his private library. It has never been given to the world, although thread-bound copies have been made. But you say that even school children in Shu know the book by rote. How can you try to deceive me like that?”

“Do you disbelieve me? Why, I can recite it.”

Then he repeated the whole book, word for word, from beginning to end.

Yang Xiu was extremely impressed. “So you can remember it after only one reading! What a marvelous genius you really are!”

He boasted not a handsome face,

Nor was his body blessed with grace.
His words streamed like a waterfall,
He read only once and knew it all.
Shu’s glories could he well rehearse,
His lore embraced the universe.

Of texts or notes of scholars
Once read, his memory held fast.

At leave-taking Yang Xiu said, “Remain a while in your lodging till I can petition the prime minister to give you an interview with the Emperor.”

Zhang Song thanked him and left. Yang Xiu went in to see Cao Cao and said, “Sir, why did you treat Zhang Song so off-handedly just now?”

“Because he spoke very rudely,” said Cao Cao.

“But you even tolerated Mi Heng. Why not with this man?”

“Mi Heng’s reputation for scholarship stood highest of all and I could not bear to put him to death. But what ability does this Zhang Song have?”

“To say nothing of his ability to speak like torrents and his talent for argument. I happened to show him your new book—he read it over once and could repeat it word for word. Such a prodigious memory is rarely found in the whole world. But he said the book was the work of an obscure person of several hundred years back and every school boy in the land of Shu knew it.”

“Could it be that the ancients and I agree in secret?” replied Cao Cao.

Therefore he ordered the book to be torn up and burned.

“I think you can present him to the Emperor, sir, and let him see the glory of the court.”

Cao Cao said grudgingly, “I am reviewing troops tomorrow on the western parade ground. You may bring him there and let him see what my army looks like so that he will go back and spread the news that after I have dealt with the south I will take the west in hand.”

Hence the very next day, Yang Xiu took Zhang Song over to the west parade ground, where a review of the mighty army was to be held. There were 50,000 of them, and when drawn up in order, they made a very brave show, with their gleaming helmets and bright new uniforms. Drums rolled to shake the heavens and weapons glittered in the sun. From all sides marched the various divisions of the forces, their gay banners fluttering and their spirited horses galloping.

Zhang Song glanced at the parade contemptuously. After a long while Cao Cao called up Zhang Song and, pointing to his

army, said: “Have you ever seen such fine heroic soldiers in your country?”

“We never have such military parades in Shu—we govern men by righteousness.”

Cao Cao changed color and looked hard at the bold speaker, who gazed back at him without the least sign of fear. Yang Xiu shot quick warning glances at him, but he paid no notice. Cao Cao went on, “I regard the rat-class of the world as mere weeds, and for my army to reach a place is to overcome it, to give battle is to conquer. Those who are with me, live—but those who oppose me, die. Do you understand?”

“Sir, I know well that when you march out your army, you always conquer. I knew it when you attacked Lu Bu at Puyang; when you fought Zhang Xiu at Wancheng; when you met Zhou Yu at the Red Cliff; when you encountered Guan Yu at Huarong; when you cut off your beard and threw away your robe at Tong Pass; and when you hid in a boat to escape the arrows on the Wei River. On all these occasions no one could stand against you.”

Cao Cao was mad with rage to be thus taunted with his misfortunes and he roared, “You impudent pedant! How dare you bring up all my failures?”

He called his attendants to push him out and put him to death.

Yang Xiu ventured to say, “He does deserve death but he comes from the remote country of Shu bearing tribute and his death would have a very negative effect on all peoples in distant regions.”

But Cao Cao was too angry to be pacified. However, Xun You also put in a word for the offender and Zhang Song was eventually not executed but driven out. He returned to his lodging, collected his things, and left the city that night for home. On the way he thought to himself, "I didn't expect Cao Cao to treat me with such arrogance when I came with the intention of giving him a province. I left Liu Zhang with a big promise but now I'm returning empty-handed and I'll be the ridicule of my fellow countrymen. Surely I can't go back. They say Liu Bei is a virtuous person. Let me go back by way of Jingzhou and see what manner of man he is. Then I can decide what to do."

So he made for Jingzhou with his servants. He had reached the border of Yingzhou* when he met a troop of horsemen, at the head of whom rode an officer in a light robe, who pulled up, saying: "Are you not Zhang Song, the Bi Jia from West Chuan, sir?"

"Yes, I am," said Zhang Song.

The officer quickly dismounted and saluted him politely. "I have been expecting you these many days. My name is Zhao Yun."

Zhang Song also dismounted and returned the salutation saying, "Then you must be Zhao Zi-long of Changshan."

Zhao Yun said that he was. "My lord knows that you have been through a long and arduous journey so he has asked me to wait for you here and offer you some wine and refreshments."

At this some soldiers, kneeling, presented wine and food to Zhang Song.

Zhang Song thought, “It seems true what people say about Liu Bei. He is liberal and kind.”

After a few cups of wine the two took the road toward Jingzhou. By evening they arrived at the city, where Zhang Song was escorted to the guesthouse. Here, he found a large number of men waiting at the gate to welcome him with the beating of drums and every sign of respect. And the officer in command, bowing, said, “My brother sent me here to prepare the guesthouse for you to rest after your long and dusty journey. My name is Guan Yu.”

So Zhang Song dismounted and entered the guesthouse with his hosts, where they exchanged formal greetings and took their seats. In a short time a feast was spread out and both men were most cordial in their attention to the guest. This roadside banquet lasted till midnight, when they withdrew to rest.

The next morning, after breakfast they mounted and continued their journey. Very soon they met Liu Bei himself, accompanied by his two chief advisors, who deferentially dismounted and stood by the roadside when they saw the guest from a distance.

Zhang Song hurriedly dismounted to meet them. Liu Bei received him with extreme respect.

“Your exalted name has been long known to me, reverberating in my ears like thunder,” said Liu Bei. “I used

to regret very much that cloudy hills and long distances had prevented me from receiving your instructions. Hearing that you are passing through, I have come specially to meet you and if you do not despise me I would like you to rest for a time in my desolate city, thus allowing me the satisfaction of attaining my long cherished desire to meet you. I should indeed hold myself fortunate."

Naturally Zhang Song's vanity was tickled and he joyfully accepted the invitation. They rode bridle to bridle into the city. When they reached the residence they exchanged formal salutes and compliments before they took their respective seats. And then a banquet was served. Throughout the meal Liu Bei chatted on about trivial everyday things, without breathing a word about the west country.

The visitor noted this steady avoidance and resolved to probe his host's thoughts. So he asked Liu Bei, "How many other districts are in your possession besides Jingzhou, sir?"

Zhuge Liang replied, "Jingzhou is only our temporary abode—we have borrowed it from Wu. They are always sending messengers to demand its return. As our lord has married the daughter of Wu he is temporarily staying here."

"Wu is quite large, with its six districts and eighty-one towns," said Zhang Song. "The people are strong and the land is fruitful. Are they still not satisfied?"

Pang Tong said, "Our lord is an uncle of the Emperor yet he cannot take up any districts, whereas those others, thievish as they are, are using force to seize as much territory as they can, much to the indignation of the wise."

“Noble sirs, pray say no more. What virtue do I have that I should expect more?” said Liu Bei.

“Not so, indeed,” said Zhang Song. “Illustrious sir, you are a member of the Hans and your noble character is widely known. It is nothing excessive, even if you set yourself up as Emperor, let alone occupying some towns and cities.”

Liu Bei deprecated such a suggestion: “Sir, you go too far—how dare I aspire to this?”

The next three days were spent in banquets and wine parties, but all the time no mention was made of the western province. At last it was time for Zhang Song to leave. Liu Bei prepared wine at the roadside pavilion to bid him farewell. Liu Bei raised his wine cup and said, “I am sincerely grateful that you have been kind enough to stay here for three days, but now the moment of parting has come. Who knows when I may have the privilege of receiving your instructions again?”

As he said this his tears flowed. Zhang Song, willing to believe that this emotion was on his account, thought how wonderfully kind and noble his host must be to be thus affected. He decided to ask his host to take the west province. So he said, “I, too, would like to wait on you day and night, sir, but it is not possible. This place of yours, I think, is not wholly desirable for you to remain long. I see Sun Quan in the south, always ready to pounce on you; I see Cao Cao in the north, never ceasing to desire to swallow the place.”

“I know this too well,” said Liu Bei, “but I have no secure place to go to.”

“Yizhou is well protected by its natural barriers. It is rich and populous, with a thousand li of fertile soil. Its wise and talented people have long admired you for your righteousness. If you march your army westward you can easily become a real power there and restore the glory of the Hans.”

“But how dare I attempt this? The ruler of Yizhou is also of the imperial house and the people there are devoted to him for his bounties. No other man could hope to unseat his hold.”

“It is not that I am betraying my master for gains,” said Zhang Song, “but in your presence I feel constrained to be perfectly open. Liu Zhang, Governor of Yizhou, is weak by nature and can neither make good use of the wise nor the capable. What is more, Zhang Lu is posing a perpetual threat in the north. People are distracted and will gladly welcome a sagacious ruler. The journey I have just made was to propose to support Cao Cao and place the province under him, but I found him set on evil, and arrogant toward the scholarly and the wise. So I have turned to you. You should take West Chuan first as your base, from where you can move north to seize Hanzhong, and later the central plains. In this way you will restore the rightful line of rule. Your name will live in history and your contributions to the country will be unprecedented. If you intend to take West Chuan I am willing to do what little I can as an ally within. But do you contemplate such a step?”

“I am deeply grateful that you think so well of me. But the governor being a member of my own family, I should lay myself open to general criticism if I were to attack him.”

“It is the duty of a true hero in the world to work out his destiny, to exert himself, and press forward among the foremost. If you fail to seize this opportunity, some others will get in before you and then it will be too late to regret.”

“I have heard much of the rugged country of Shu with its many high mountains and numerous streams. Wagons cannot travel together nor can horses ride side by side. Even though one has the intention to take it, how could such a country be conquered?”

Then Zhang Song drew the map from his sleeve. “I am deeply moved by your virtue, so I offer you this map of the country, from which you will know its roads and rivers.”

Liu Bei unrolled the map: it was covered with detailed notes of the topography of the western land, showing its rivers and hills, its dangerous sites, its storehouses and granaries, and its treasuries. Everything was clearly stated.

Zhang Song went on, “Sir, you can prepare your plans promptly. I have two best friends, who will certainly help you. And when they come to see you, you may be perfectly frank with them. Their names are Fa Zheng and Meng Da.”

Liu Bei thanked him with joined hands. He said, “As the green hills never grow old and the green waters always remain, so will I never forget your kindness. And when I shall have accomplished my task you will have no mean reward.”

“How dare I expect a reward? Having met a true lord like you I feel compelled to bare my heart.”

Zhang Song took his leave soon after. Guan Yu and the others escorted him a long way.

When he arrived in Yizhou, Zhang Song lost no time in meeting his friends, Fa Zheng and Meng Da. The former was the first to come and he was told of Cao Cao's arrogance toward men of talents. "He is a man to share worries but not joy," continued Zhang Song. "I have promised Yizhou to Liu Bei, the uncle of the Emperor, and I have come especially to consult you on the matter."

"I think Liu Zhang incapable," said Fa Zheng, "and I have been thinking of going over to Liu Bei for some time. So we are of the same mind."

Shortly after, Meng Da arrived. Seeing the other two in secret conversation, Meng Da said: "I know what you two are about—you are scheming to hand over Yizhou to somebody."

"Exactly," said Zhang Song, "But can you guess to whom it should go?"

"None but Liu Bei," replied Meng Da.

All three clapped their hands and laughed.

Fa Zheng said to Zhang Song, "You will see our lord tomorrow. What are you going to say?"

"I will recommend you two to be sent to Jingzhou as envoys."

They both agreed that it was a suitable scheme. The following day, Zhang Song went to see his master Liu Zhang, who asked him about his mission in the capital.

Zhang Song said, “Cao Cao is a rebel who desires to get the whole country into his hands. We cannot rely on him. And he also hankers after this district.”

“Then what will become of us?” said Liu Zhang.

“I have a plan to check both our enemies,” said Zhang Song. “Liu Bei, the Emperor’s uncle, now in Jingzhou, is of the imperial house, like you. He is generous and well-disposed, with the air of a respectable elder. After the battle of the Red Cliff his name was a terror to Cao Cao. How can Zhang Lu withstand him? Why not send someone over to form an alliance with him and ask him to come and assist you in fighting against Cao Cao and Zhang Lu?”

“I have been thinking about that for a long time,” said Liu Zhang. “Can you recommend a suitable emissary?”

“That must be Fa Zheng and Meng Da.”

These two were summoned. Fa Zheng was given a letter and ordered to proceed first to Jingzhou as emissary to set up friendly relations with Liu Bei; Meng Da would follow in due course with a troop of 5,000 men to welcome Liu Bei into the west country.

While they were discussing the details of the plan, a person rushed in, his face all running with sweat, and cried out: “My

lord, your land will be lost to another if you listen to Zhang Song's words."

Greatly startled, Zhang Song turned to look at the intruder, who was

Huang Quan, an official in the governor's service.

The governor said, "Why do you say so? Liu Bei is of my family and so I am seeking his support."'

Huang Quan said, "I know what kind of a man Liu Bei is: he is generous to people so as to win their hearts; he is soft but his softness can overcome the hardest and withstand heroes. Those from far off admire him and those nearby look up to him. He also has the wisest advisors and the boldest warriors. If you call him here to assist you, do you think that he will be content to remain a subordinate? And if you treat him as an honored guest, can a state stand two rulers? Listen to me, my lord, and you stand secure as Mount Tai; be deaf to my words and your position is as precarious as a pile of eggs. This Zhang Song has lately come home through Jingzhou, where he has certainly been plotting with Liu Bei. Slay this man first and then destroy Liu Bei. That will be for the happiness of this land."

"But how else am I to fend off my two enemies?"

"Fortify your country; dig deep the moat and raise your ramparts. Then wait for the matter to resolve itself."

"If the invaders come the situation will be as critical as when one's eyebrows are singed. It is idle talk to tell me to wait for the matter to resolve itself," Liu Zhang said.

So he took no notice of Huang Quan's advice, but ordered Fa Zheng to set out. However, another of his subordinates, named Wang Lei, voiced his dissent.

With bowed head Wang Lei said, "My lord, you will bring misfortune upon yourself if you listen to Zhang Song."

Liu Zhang said, "How can it be? I am going to enter into an alliance with Liu Bei in order to withstand Zhang Lu."

"An invasion by Zhang Lu will be but a skin disease. Liu Bei's entry into this country will be a mortal malady. Liu Bei is an unscrupulous adventurer. He was once in Cao Cao's service, yet plotted against him. Then he hung on to Sun Quan and seized Jingzhou. This shows his character and his designs. Do you think that you two can dwell together? If you invite him, then this place is lost."

"No more wild talk!" cried Liu Zhang angrily. "Liu Bei is of my clan and will not take my territory."

He told his attendants to lead both men outside and ordered Fa Zheng to depart. So he did—and before long came to Jingzhou to see Liu Bei. After proper obeisance was made Fa Zheng presented his master's letter, which Liu Bei opened and read.

> "Liu Zhang, a junior member of the House of Liu, to General Liu Bei: From my humble place long have I

gazed in your direction, but the roads of Shu are precipitous and I have failed to send you my tribute. This is to my shame. I have often heard that 'Friends rescue each other in misfortune and aid each other in difficulty'. If friends can be so supportive of one another, how much more should members of the same family? Now Zhang Lu is mustering an army to invade my northern frontier, much to my anxiety. So I send this letter to appeal to you for help. If you remember the close bonds of family and will play a brotherly part, I pray that you will lead your army here to destroy these ruffians. You will be my eternal protector and I will see to it that you are richly rewarded. This letter leaves much unsaid, but I await your arrival."

This letter greatly pleased Liu Bei. He gave a banquet for the envoy, and after several rounds of wine, he dismissed the attendants and spoke to Fa Zheng confidentially: "Sir, I have long heard your name and your friend Zhang Song has told me a great deal about your admirable virtues. I feel so grateful that I have at last the opportunity to hear your instructions."

Fa Zheng bowed. "That is too great praise for a humble emissary from Shu. But they say that horses neighed when they saw Bo Luo, the supreme judge of horses of old days, and men die for their lords who recognize their talents. Have you thought further of Zhang Song's proposals, sir?"

"All my life I have been a wanderer, seeking a living under another's roof, and I cannot help lamenting over my poor lot. It has often crossed my mind that even a tiny bird like the wren has a twig to call its own and a cunning hare has three

burrows to secure its safety. Does not a man need at least a shelter? Your land of Shu is fertile and tempting, but its ruler is of my family and I cannot plot against him."

"Yes, Yizhou is a very paradise. But without a ruler who can withstand trouble it cannot exist. Liu Zhang does not know how to use the wise and the land will speedily pass to another. Today it is offered to you and you must not miss this opportunity. Remember the saying, 'The leader in the hunt gets the quarry.' If you intend to take it, I will serve you to death."

Liu Bei thanked him but said, "Let me think about this further."

The banquet terminated and the guest was conducted to his lodging by Zhuge Liang. Liu Bei sat thinking by himself. Presently, Pang Tong went in and said, "It is foolish not to decide when decision is needed. You are highly intelligent, my lord—why do you hesitate?"

"What should my reply be?" asked Liu Bei.

"Jingzhou is threatened by Sun Quan in the east and Cao Cao in the north and it will be difficult for you to attain your ends here. But Yizhou is a populous, fertile, and rich land, a base with the greatest possibilities. You have the promise of assistance from two men within and it seems like a gift of providence. Why hesitate?"

"Now in this world, the person who is exactly my opposite is Cao Cao. We are as different as fire and water. He is impetuous and I am tolerant; he is cruel and I am humane; he

is deceitful and I am loyal. In everything, if I act directly contrary to him, I will succeed. I do not want to risk the loss of the confidence and trust of the people for a trifling advantage."

Pang Tong smiled at these sentiments. "My lord, your words are quite in accord with traditional rectitude but they scarcely suit the present days of chaos. To use force to conquer is of course not right but to adhere too obstinately to traditional decency is to do nothing. One must be ready to adapt to circumstances. And it is also the practice of the ancient kings 'To annex the weak and attack the evil' and 'To seize by force but rule with moderation.' If after the seizure you reward with righteousness and turn the land into a great country, will you be guilty of a breach of trust? Remember if you do not take it now, another will."

Liu Bei, suddenly seeing the light, replied, "Your words are as jewels— they should be engraved on my very heart."

So he summoned Zhuge Liang to discuss sending an army to the west.

Zhuge Liang said, "This place here is important and must be well defended."

Liu Bei replied, "I will go to Yizhou with Pang Tong, Huang Zhong, and Wei Yan, while you stay here to defend Jingzhou with my two brothers and Zhao Yun."

So Zhuge Liang was in charge of the entire defense force in Jingzhou. Guan Yu was sent to guard the pass of Qingni, a key point on the way to Xiangyang; Zhang Fei was to take

care of four towns and to patrol the river; and Zhao Yun was to camp at Jiangling while also defending the neighboring town of Gongan. For the march westward, Huang Zhong was to lead the van, Wei Yan to command the rearguard, while Liu Bei and two young officers were to be in the center. Pang Tong was made chief advisor of the whole army of 50,000 men.

Just before they set out, Liao Hua came with a troop to offer his service to Liu Bei. He and his men were asked to help Guan Yu guard against Cao Cao.

It was in winter that the expedition started toward the west. Soon they met the force under Meng Da, who told Liu Bei that he was sent by his master to escort him to Yizhou. Liu Bei dispatched a messenger to inform Liu Zhang that he had embarked on the westward expedition and the latter sent orders to his various districts along the way that they should supply Liu Bei's army with money and grain.

Liu Zhang proposed to go out in person to welcome Liu Bei at Fucheng. He ordered his men to prepare carriages, tents, and banners. All the escort were to be dressed in glittering armor. At this, Huang Quan again tried to dissuade him. "My lord, if you go out you will be exposed to danger," he said. "I have been in your service for many years and I cannot bear to see you fall victim to another's wiles. Pray think carefully."

Zhang Song said, "What he said is to sow discord between kinsmen and increase the power of your enemy. Assuredly his words are to your detriment."

Liu Zhang then spoke angrily to Huang Quan saying, “My mind is made up. How dare you oppose me?”

The objector bowed his head and wept. Approaching nearer, he seized his master’s robe with his teeth to try to stop him from leaving. Liu Zhang angrily shook his robe clear and rose from his seat. Huang Quan, still trying to hold on, dropped to the ground, and two of his teeth fell out in the fall. Liu Zhang ordered guards to push him out and, crying bitterly, he went home.

As Liu Zhang was starting another man cried, “My lord, you neglect his loyal words. Do you want to go to your doom?” So saying he prostrated himself at the steps in an effort to make his lord change his mind. He was Li Hui of Jianning.

“I hear the Emperor has his ministers to remonstrate with him and the father, his sons,” he said. “Huang Quan’s words are loyal and you ought to listen. To let Liu Bei into this land is to welcome the tiger into your gates.”

“Liu Bei is my brother and will not harm me,” said the prefect. “Who else dares to oppose me again will suffer death.” And he ordered Li Hui to be thrown out.

Zhang Song said, “The civil officials of Shu are only concerned about the safety of their own families and no longer render services to you, while the military officers are resting on their past merits and each has some scheme of his own to further. If you do not get Liu Bei to help you, you will be opposed by the invaders from without and your own people from within. That will be the road to ruin.”

The prefect agreed that the plan was to his best advantage. Soon he mounted his horse to ride out to Elm Tree Bridge.

Then it was reported to him that Wang Lei had suspended himself, head downwards, from the city gate. In one hand he held a written petition and in the other a knife. "And he says that if you do not heed him he will cut the rope and die at your feet," concluded the messenger.

Liu Zhang went to the gate, took the paper, and read: "Good medicine tastes bitter but cures the disease; faithful words offend the ear but benefit the conduct. Of old the king of Chu, failing to listen to Qu Yuan,* went to meet the lords at Wu Pass and was besieged by Qin. Now you, sir, are leaving your place thoughtlessly to welcome Liu Bei, but I fear there is a way out and none back. Could you but behead Zhang Song in the marketplace and abandon this alliance with Liu Bei, it would be to the happiness of all the people of Shu and the safety of your territory."

Anger rose in his breast as he read this. "Why do you insult me when I go to meet a kindly kinsman?"

At this Wang Lei gave a great cry, cut the rope and fell dead to the ground.

Head downwards at the city gate he hung,

A last petition in his outstretched hand,
Resolved that, were his words rejected, he
Would repay his master by his own death.

Loyal, too, was the other who lost his teeth
But submitted to Liu Bei in the end.

Sincere indeed, but how can he compare
With staunch Wang Lei, who remained true to the end?

With a great company, Liu Zhang went out to welcome his kinsman, followed by more than a thousand wagons laden with supplies.

Liu Bei's foremost division had by then arrived at the Dian River. During the march the army observed strict discipline, without in the least affecting the life of the local people, what with the provisions supplied by the local governments, and with Liu Bei's order that anyone who dared to take things from the people would suffer the penalty of death. Thus no one was disobedient and the people came in crowds to watch the soldiers marching by and welcomed them in every way. Liu Bei soothed them with very gracious words.

Then Fa Zheng secretly showed Pang Tong a letter from Zhang Song, proposing the assassination of Liu Zhang when he arrived to welcome Liu Bei at Fucheng.

Pang Tong cautioned him to say nothing about that for the moment. "Wait for opportunities to arise after the two Lius have met," he added. "But now is too early to talk. Any leakage will spoil the plan."

So Fa Zheng said nothing. Fucheng, where the meeting was to take place, lies three hundred and sixty li from Chengdu. Liu Zhang arrived first and sent his men to welcome Liu Bei. The

two armies camped on the bank of the Fu River. Liu Bei went into the city to see the governor and they met cordially, as brothers should. Both shed a few tears as each opened his heart to the other. Then a banquet was given and after this they returned to their own camps.

Back in his own camp Liu Zhang said to his followers: “How ridiculous were Huang Quan and Wang Lei! They suspected my brother for no reason at all. I see he is really a kindly and noble man, and with him to support me I do not have to fear either Cao Cao or Zhang Lu. And I owe all this to Zhang Song.”

To show his gratitude he took off the green silken robe he wore and sent it as a gift to Zhang Song together with five hundred liang* of gold.

However, his officers and advisors did not share his optimism and they warned him to be cautious. “Do not rejoice too soon, sir,” they said. “Liu Bei is tough inside, despite his mild exterior. His heart is unfathomable and you should be on your guard.”

“You are all too suspicious,” he said, laughing, “my brother is no double-dealer, I am sure.”

When Liu Bei had returned to his own tent, Pang Tong came in to ask what impression he had of his host.

“He is really a very honest man,” said Liu Bei.

“He is good enough, but some of his officers are discontented at this turn of affairs and it is difficult to predict what our fate

will be. I think it is better to ask Liu Zhang to a banquet and assassinate him there and then. Place a hundred guards armed with swords and axes behind the partition, and at a signal from you, they will rush out and finish him. All that will remain to be done is to march into Chengdu. In this way no sword need be drawn, no arrow need be fitted to the string—and the province will be yours."

"He is a brother of mine and has treated me with sincerity. Besides, I have just arrived and so far I am unknown in this land. Such a deed would be abhorrent to both Heaven and the people here. Even a tyrant will not follow such a scheme as yours."

"The scheme is not mine," said Pang Tong. "It is Zhang Song who sends a secret letter to Fa Zheng and says there must be no delay."

At this moment Fa Zheng came in and said, "This is not for ourselves— we are only trying to follow the will of Heaven."

"Liu Zhang and I are of the same family and I will shudder at harming him."

"Sir, you are wrong," said Fa Zheng. "If you do not act as we propose, Zhang Lu will surely take Shu in revenge for the death of his mother. Then what is there for you at the end of your long march? Advance, and success is yours; retreat, and you have nothing. And delay is most dangerous. At any moment this scheme may leak out and you yourself will be the victim. This is your chance when Heaven and men both smile on you. Act before Liu Zhang suspects you and establish yourself as soon as possible. This is the best policy."

Pang Tong, too, did his best to try to persuade Liu Bei into accepting this scheme.

Though the master still had some kindness left

His officials were on the murderous scheme bent.

What Liu Bei would decide to do will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* A famous scholar in West Han Dynasty, native of Zhu in modern Sichuan province.

† A famous general in West Han Dynasty, native of Zhu.

‡ A famous doctor in West Han Dynasty, native of Honan.

§ A famous astrologer in West Han Dynasty, native of Zhu.

* Modern Wuhan in central China.

* A great poet (c. 340–278 B.C.) and an official in the kingdom of Chu during the period of Warring States. Out of favor with his king because of his more democratic political views, he was exiled for a long period during his life and later drowned himself in the Milu River (in modern Hubei province) after Chu was destroyed by its rival Qin. His memory is cherished even today.

* A monetary unit of old days, equal to about two ounces (57 grams).

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Zhao Yun Rescues A-Dou on the River

Sun Quan Writes a Letter to Repulse Cao Cao

In spite of the persuasion of Pang Tong and Fa Zheng, Liu Bei consistently refused to approve of the plot to assassinate his kinsman Liu Zhang, even if he could gain possession of Yizhou by that means.

The next day there was another banquet in the city, at which the two Lius unburdened themselves freely to each other and became exceedingly friendly. In the middle of the banquet, when wine had gone several rounds, Pang Tong said to Fa Zheng, “Under the circumstances we have to ignore our master’s decision and act on our own.” So saying, he ordered Wei Yan to demonstrate sword-play at the banquet and to use the opportunity to kill Liu Zhang.

At his order, Wei Yan went into the banquet hall shortly afterward with his sword drawn and said, “As there is no entertainment at this banquet, may I show you a little sword-play to amuse you?”

In the meantime Pang Tong called up all his guards, who were then told to range themselves along the lower part of the hall, ready to join in the slaughter the moment Wei Yan

should fall on the governor. However, these murderous preparations did not escape the notice of Liu Zhang's officers. Sensing the impending danger one of them, Zhang Ren, drew his sword and said, "An opponent is needed to make sword-play a success. I would like to join General Wei Yan."

So the two began fencing. Presently, at a glance from Wei Yan, Liu Feng also went up and took a position at his colleague's side. At once three of the officers of the other side followed suit, saying, "And we three will come in too—it may add to your amusement and help to raise a laugh."

Startled, Liu Bei hastily drew the sword of an attendant's in his hand and, standing up, he cried, "We brothers have only come together for a hearty drink, without any other intentions. This is no Hongmeng Banquet.* Why should there be any sword-play? Put away your swords or I will slay you!"

Liu Zhang also scolded his officers. "Why do you wear swords at all at a meeting of two brothers?" And he ordered all his officers and guards to take off their weapons.

Disarmed, they sulkily withdrew. Then Liu Bei called them into the hall, gave them wine and said, "Have no doubts, gentlemen. We two brothers, of the same flesh and blood, are here to talk over our great design—and we are one in purpose."

The officers bowed and retired. Liu Zhang took his guest by the hand, saying, "Brother, I will never forget your kindness."

They continued drinking merrily till nighttime. When at length Liu Bei reached his camp he blamed Pang Tong for having caused the confusion.

“Why did you endeavor to force me into committing a great wrong?” said Liu Bei. “There must be no repetition of this.”

Pang Tong retired, sighing deeply. When Liu Zhang reached his own camp his officers said to him, “Sir, you saw what happened today at the banquet. We think it prudent for you to return at once to Chengdu.”

“My brother is different from ordinary men,” replied Liu Zhang.

“He may not be inclined toward murder himself, but all his men are intent on annexing this land of ours to their own advantage.”

“Do not try to sow dissension between us and make us quarrel,” said Liu Zhang.

And he took no heed of their warning and continued to drink together with his newly-found brother. One day, when he and Liu Bei were enjoying together relaxation from the cares of state, news came that Zhang Lu was mobilizing an army to invade Jiameng Pass. The governor begged Liu Bei to go and defend it. Liu Bei consented and left immediately with his own troops. At once Liu Zhang’s officers took advantage of his departure to urge their master to place his major officers in command of all the strategic points so as to guard against any attempts of Liu Bei’s to seize the land. At first Liu Zhang paid no attention, but later, persuaded by their repeated

pleadings, he consented to take some steps to safeguard himself. He sent Yang Huai and Gao Pei to defend Fushui Pass. He himself returned to Chengdu.

Liu Bei, in the meantime, went to Jiameng Pass. Once there, he immediately set about trying to win the hearts of the local people by maintaining strict discipline over his men and bestowing kindness and favors where necessary.

News of these happenings in the west duly reached Wu, and Sun Quan, its ruler, summoned his counselors to consider what counter moves he should take. Gu Yong said, "I have an infallible plan. Liu Bei and part of his army are now far away in the west and separated from us by difficult country. Therefore he cannot return quickly. We can send a troop to hold the key points to cut his path of retreat. Then muster all our forces to seize Jingzhou and Xiangyang. This is a chance you should not miss."

"This is an excellent plan," said Sun Quan.

But just then, a voice was heard from behind the screen, crying, "Whoever proposed that scheme should be executed at once! Did he want to kill my daughter?"

Everyone started with surprise. It was the Dowager. She looked very angry as she entered the hall, crying, "What is to become of my only daughter, who is the wife of Liu Bei?"

Then turning her wrathful eyes to Sun Quan, she said, "You were heir to your father and brother and obtained possession of all these districts without the least effort. Yet you are

dissatisfied, and would sacrifice your own flesh and blood for the sake of adding a little to your land."

"It is my fault, mother," replied Sun Quan obediently. "I would never think of going contrary to your wishes." Then he dismissed the assembly. The old lady, still nursing her wrath, retired to her chamber.

Left alone beneath the portico, Sun Quan thought, "If this chance is lost, when will Jingzhou be mine?"

While still deep in thought, Zhang Zhao came up to ask, "What is troubling you, my lord?"

"I was thinking about what we had been discussing just now."

"The difficulty can be easily removed," said Zhang Zhao. "Choose a trusty person with five hundred men to get into Jingzhou without being detected and deliver a secret letter to your sister, saying that her mother is dangerously ill and anxious to see her. Hearing of her mother's illness she will rush home at once. Tell her to take with her the only son of Liu Bei, who will then be glad enough to exchange Jingzhou for his son. If he will not, you can still send the army."

"That is a wonderful plan," said Sun Quan. "Furthermore, I have the right person to carry it out successfully. He is called Zhou Shan, a very bold man. He used to work in the palace, waiting on my brother, and my sister knows him. He is the man to send."

"Keep it to yourself, then, sir," said Zhang Zhao, "and let him start quickly."

The messenger, Zhou Shan, was given five hundred soldiers disguised as traders to sail in five vessels loaded with weapons. He also took with him a forged letter to look like a veritable message from the court of Wu to the ruler of Jingzhou, in case he was stopped by guards.

Zhou Shan set out for Jingzhou by water and was not long on the way. The boats were anchored by the bank while he alone landed and went into the city to Liu Bei's residence, where he asked the doorkeepers to announce him to their mistress. He was admitted and led into the presence of Lady Sun, to whom he submitted the secret letter. When she read that her mother was dying she began to weep and asked the messenger about her condition. Zhou Shan knelt down and said, "The Dowager is seriously ill and frets day and night for seeing you, madam. If you do not go quickly it will be too late." He added that she should take little A-dou with her so that the Dowager might see him once before she died.

Lady Sun replied, "My husband is away on an expedition. I think I must inform Zhuge Liang before I go."

"But what if he says he must inform your husband and await his consent?" said Zhou Shan.

"If I went without permission, we might be stopped on our way."

"My ships are all ready in the river," said Zhou Shan. "Please take the carriage and leave the city at once, madam."

Naturally the news of her mother's illness greatly disturbed the young wife. In a short time her carriage was ready and she

mounted, taking the boy A-dou with her. She took an escort of thirty people, all armed, and was soon at the riverside and had embarked before her departure was reported to the chief advisor. But just as the boats were starting, a voice was heard, shouting, “Do not start yet—let me bid my lady farewell.”

The voice was Zhao Yun’s—he had just returned from an inspection trip and was told of Lady Sun’s sudden departure. He was so startled that he dashed down to the riverbank like a whirlwind, with only a few followers. He arrived just as the boat was setting out, and there he saw Zhou Shan standing in the prow, a long spear in his hand.

“Who are you that dares to hinder the movements of your mistress?” cried Zhou Shan.

Zhou Shan ordered his men to cast off and get under way, and also to take out their weapons to fight. The ship sailed swiftly off with a favorable wind and a strong current beneath her keel.

But Zhao Yun followed along the bank. “My lady, you can go as you please,” he cried. “But there is one thing I have to say to you.”

Zhou Shan turned a deaf ear and only urged his men to row faster. Zhao Yun followed down the bank for some ten or more li. Then he saw a fishing boat made fast to the bank. He at once dismounted, cast off the rope, took his spear, and leaped into the boat. Two of his men went down into the boat with him and rowed as fast as they could toward the big vessel in which sat Lady Sun.

Zhou Shan ordered his men to shoot at Zhao Yun with arrows which were, however, parried into the river by the latter's spear. As he approached, the men of Wu threatened him with their spears. Throwing his spear into the bottom of the fishing boat, Zhao Yun drew the sharp sword that he wore at his side, pushed aside the opposing spears and leaped upon the larger vessel. The men of Wu fell back in surprise and fear as Zhao Yun advanced into the body of the ship. There sat Lady Sun with little A-dou in her arms.

"Why this rude intrusion?" she said angrily.

The warrior sheathed his sword and asked humbly, "Where are you going, madam? And why not let our advisor know about it?"

"My mother is dying—there is no time to inform any person of my departure," said Lady Sun.

"But why are you taking the young master with you if you are going to visit a sick person?"

"A-dou is my son and I cannot leave him behind, neglected."

"You are wrong, madam. My lord has but this one son and I rescued the child from among a million men in the great battle at the Long Slope. There is no reason for you to take him away."

Lady Sun flared up in anger. "You are but a common soldier in our service. How dare you interfere in our family affairs?"

“My lady, if you want to go, then go, but leave the young master behind.”

“Are you insubordinate, jumping on board the ship like that?” cried Lady Sun.

“If you will not leave the young master behind I cannot let you go, even if I have to die ten thousand deaths,” said Zhao Yun stubbornly.

Lady Sun ordered her maids to seize him, but he just pushed them off. Then he snatched the boy from her arms and ran out to the prow of the ship. He wished to get the vessel over to the bank, but no one would aid him; and as Lady Sun was his mistress, he thought it would be wrong to begin to slay indiscriminately. So he was stuck, alone on the ship, not knowing what to do. Lady Sun shouted to her maids to get the boy back from Zhao Yun. But, holding the child in one hand and his sword in the other, he kept everyone at bay. All this time Zhou Shan was at the helm, steering the ship into midstream. Zhao Yun, without anyone to assist him, could only keep the boy from harm. It was quite impossible for him to get the vessel in toward the shore.

At this desperate moment, Zhao Yun saw a string of ships filing out from a creek lower down the stream, flags fluttering and drums beating. He was just thinking in dismay that he had fallen for a trick of Wu when he noticed a mighty warrior standing in the prow of the leading craft. He was armed with a long spear, and it was Zhang Fei. He also shouted to his sister-in-law to leave the child.

Zhang Fei had been out scouting when he heard the news of his sister-in-law's abrupt departure. He at once made for the river with the intention of intercepting her.

He had arrived in the nick of time to stop the ships of Wu. Sword in hand, he jumped aboard Lady Sun's vessel. As he came on board Zhou Shan drew his sword and advanced toward him, but one sweep of Zhang Fei's spear laid him dead on the deck. And the grim warrior flung his head at the feet of his sister-in-law.

"Why are you so very rude, brother?" cried Lady Sun, now quite frightened.

"Sister," said Zhang Fei, "you thought very little of my brother when you tried to leave without his permission. That was improper."

"My mother is very ill—it is a matter of life and death," she cried. "If I had waited for your brother's permission to go it would have been too late. If you do not let me go now I will throw myself into the river."

The two soldiers took counsel together. It was hardly right, they thought, for officers to force their lord's wife into committing suicide. They decided to keep the child and let the lady go.

Then Zhang Fei said, "Sister, my brother is an uncle of the Emperor and a good match for you. We will take our leave now. Return soon if you remember our brother."

Taking the child with him, he left the vessel with Zhao Yun, and the five ships of Wu continued their voyage downstream. One poet has praised Zhao Yun of his conduct:

Some years before, he saved the child,

That time his mother died;

Again like service he performs,
Upon the Yangtze's tide.

The men of Wu all in the ship,
Were stricken down with fear,
Search all the world, you'll never find
Of bold Zhao Yun the peer.

Another has eulogized Zhang Fei:

At Long Slope Bridge,

With rage he boiled,
Like wild beast roared,
And men recoiled.
From danger now

His prince is saved.

On history's page
His name is engraved.

Quite satisfied with their success the two warriors sailed homeward. Before they had gone far they met Zhuge Liang with a squadron of ships. The advisor was very pleased to

find they had recovered the child and they three joyfully returned to Jingzhou, where a written account of the whole incident was sent to Liu Bei.

When Lady Sun reached her home she related to her brother how Zhou Shan was slain and the child snatched from her. Naturally Sun Quan was infuriated at the miscarriage of his scheme and he resolved to attack Jingzhou in revenge of his slain messenger.

"Now that my sister has returned home there is no longer any family tie to prevent the attack, and I will take a full measure of revenge for the death of Zhou Shan," said Sun Quan. So he called the counselors together to consider the expedition.

But before they could decide upon any plan their deliberations were suddenly cut short by the news that Cao Cao was coming down upon the south with a very large army, burning to avenge his defeat at the Red Cliff. All thoughts now turned toward repelling his attack.

At this time sad news also came that the senior official Zhang Hong, who had retired to his home because of illness, had died and his testament was sent to his lord to read. In it he advised Sun Quan to remove the seat of government to Moling, where the landscape had the impress of regal dignity, befitting a man who cherished the ambition of founding an enduring dynasty. Sun Quan wept in sorrow when he read these last words of his loyal official. "He advised me to move to Moling," he told his counselors present. "How could I disobey him?" And he at once gave orders to prepare for the move and to build a stone wall around the city, intending henceforth to make it his capital.

As a protection against Cao Cao, Lu Meng proposed building a rampart at Port Ruxu. Some other officers opposed this, saying, “When the enemy comes we will go ashore to attack, and after that we will return to our ships. What is the use of a rampart?”

Lu Meng replied, “One must prepare for emergencies. Soldiers have their ups and downs and sometimes lose battles. On an urgent occasion the men will not be able to reach the river, and how then are they to embark?”

Sun Quan agreed with him entirely. Quoting an old saying, he said, “Against a distant risk provide, and sorrow does not walk by your side.”

So he sent a great many men to build ramparts at Ruxu day and night, so as to finish the project before the enemy came.

Away in the capital, Cao Cao’s power and glory increased daily. Dong Zhao proposed that a special title, Wei Gong, or Duke of Wei, should be conferred upon him.

He said, “In all history no one has rendered such services as you have, not even the ancient Duke of Zhou or Lu Shang. These thirty years you have exposed yourself to all sorts of risks, been combed by the wind and washed in the rain; and you have swept evil from the land, succored the people, and restored the Hans. Who of all government officials can rank with you? It will be fitting for you to become the Duke of Wei and receive the Nine Honors to match your merit and virtue.”

Now the Nine Honors were:

– Chariots and horses (one gilt chariot and one war chariot; eight dark mares and eight yellow horses)
– Court dresses and shoes
– Court music band
– Red gates
– Steps to the dais
– Tiger Guards (300 at the gates)
– Axes
– Bows and arrows (one red-lacquered bow with 100 red arrows; ten black-lacquered bows with one thousand black arrows)
– Libation Vessels

However, all the courtiers were not of one mind. Xun Yu objected, “No, sir, this should not be done. As your original purpose in raising a just force was to restore the authority of the Han House, you should remain loyal and humble. The virtuous man respects righteousness and will not act in this way.”

Cao Cao suddenly changed color at this rebuke.

Dong Zhao said, “How can we disappoint the hopes of many because of the words of one?”

So a memorial was presented to the Emperor and Cao Cao’s ambition and desires were gratified with the title of Duke of Wei and the acquisition of the Nine Honors.

“I did not expect to see this day,” said Xun Yu, sighing.

This remark was repeated to the newly created Duke, who took it that Xun Yu would no longer aid him or favor his designs. In his heart rose a strong hatred of his advisor.

In the winter of the seventeenth year of Jian An, Cao Cao decided to send an army to conquer Wu, and he ordered Xun Yu to go with the army. Xun Yu understood from this that Cao Cao wished his death, so in the middle of the expedition he sent in his resignation on the plea of illness. While he was at home he received one day a food box. It was addressed in Cao Cao's own handwriting. Opening it, he found there was nothing inside. He understood. He took some poison and died. He was fifty years of age.

> Xun Yu's talents were to all men known,
> 'Twas sad that at the door of power he tripped.
> Posterity is wrong to class him with Lord Liu,*
> For, nearing death, he dared not face his prince of Han.

Xun Yu's son sent the sad news of his death to Cao Cao, who began to regret what he had done and gave orders for a grandiose funeral. He also obtained for the dead man the posthumous title of a marquis.

The northern army reached Ruxu, where he first sent Cao Hong with a force of 30,000 mailed cavalrymen down to the riverside to find out how things stood. Cao Hong soon sent back a report to the effect that numerous banners and flags could be seen streaming along the riverside, but there was no sign of the army. Worried by this report, Cao Cao himself led the main army to proceed to Ruxu, where he deployed his troops in battle array. Then, escorted by a hundred or so

followers, he climbed up a hill to look down far into the river and saw a fleet of ships all arranged in admirable order, the divisions being marked by distinctive flags. Their equipment glittered in the sunlight. In the center was a large ship on which was a huge umbrella, and beneath the shade sat Sun Quan in the midst of his staff.

"That is the sort of son to have," said Cao Cao in admiration. "Not such piglets and puppies as Liu Biao's."

Suddenly, at a signal the ships got under way and came flying toward him, while a land force moved out of the rampart to attack Cao Cao's men, who at once retreated in great haste. Then a company of horsemen led by the blue-eyed, red-bearded Sun Quan rushed to the hillside and charged straight at Cao Cao, who hastily fled. But at this moment two redoubtable officers of Wu also dashed forth to attack and Cao Cao was hard pressed. Xu Chu came to his rescue and fought with the men of Wu till his master could escape. Xu Chu fought some thirty bouts before he disentangled himself and returned to his own side.

When Cao Cao returned to camp he bestowed rich rewards on Xu Chu, who had saved him and reprimanded his other officers for their too hasty retreat. "You blunt the keen spirits of the men, and if you do such a thing again I will put you all to death," he said.

At about midnight, there arose a great commotion at the gates of the camp, and when Cao Cao went outside he found that the enemy had crept up secretly and started a conflagration. The men of Wu forced their way into the stockade and dashed

hither and thither, slaying till dawn. Cao Cao and his army had to withdraw fifty li to set up camp again.

Cao Cao was greatly distressed by this setback. One day he was sitting in his tent poring over the Art of War when his advisor Cheng Yu came in to see him.

"Sir, you know well the art of war," said Cheng Yu. "Why have you forgotten the maxim 'Speed is the key to the success of a military action'? You have delayed your operation this time, which allowed your enemy time to build ramparts at Ruxu, making it difficult to capture the place. It would be better now to retreat to the capital and await a more propitious moment."

Cao Cao said nothing and Cheng Yu went away. Cao Cao remained seated in his tent, leaning on a small table by his side, where he fell asleep. Suddenly he heard the sound of turbulent waves, as if made by hundreds and thousands of galloping horses. He hastened to look and saw rising out of the river in front of him a huge red sun, its rays so bright that it dazzled his eyes. Looking up at the sky, he saw two more suns shining down on this one. And as he wondered, the first sun suddenly flew up and then dropped among the hills in front of his camp, with a roar like thunder.

This woke him. He was in his tent and had been dreaming. The sentry at his tent door was just reporting noon.

Cao Cao had his horse saddled and rode out with some fifty men toward the spot he had seen in his dream. As he stood gazing around him, a troop of horsemen came along with Sun

Quan at their head. He wore a glittering helmet and was clad in silver armor.

Seeing his chief enemy, he showed no sign of haste or dismay, but reined in his steed on the hill and, pointing with his whip at Cao Cao, said: “Sir, you hold the capital in the hollow of your hand. You have reached the acme of wealth and power. Why are you still insatiable in your greed, and must come to encroach upon our southern country?”

Cao Cao replied, “You are disobedient, and I have the Emperor’s decree to execute you.”

“What nonsense!” cried Sun Quan with a laugh. “Are you not ashamed? Everyone knows that you control every act of the Emperor and you tyrannize over the nobles. I am no rebel against the Han, but I do desire to capture you and reform the government.”

Enraged at this speech, Cao Cao commanded his officers to go up the hill and take Sun Quan prisoner. But before they could obey, two troops of archers and crossbowmen led by four officers rushed out from behind the hill to the sound of beating drums, and instantly arrows and crossbow bolts began to fall like raindrops around Cao Cao, who at once fled back, pursued hotly by the archers and bowmen. However, Xu Chu soon appeared with the Tiger Guard, who rescued Cao Cao and escorted him back to his camp. The men of Wu scored a victory and they triumphantly marched back to Ruxu.

Alone in his camp, Cao Cao thought, “This Sun Quan is certainly no ordinary man, and by the presage of the sun in my dream he will become an emperor in the future.”

He began to think about withdrawal, but he hesitated for fear that it would incur ridicule from the men of Wu. So the two armies remained facing each other a whole month, with occasional skirmishes or battles in which victory fell sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other.

And so it went on till the new year when the spring rains filled the watercourses to overflowing and the soldiers were wading in deep mud. Their sufferings were extreme and Cao Cao became vexed at heart. At a council he consulted his officers and advisors, whose views were divided, some being for retreat and others anxious to hold on, arguing that the warm weather was exactly the time to fight. Their chief could not make up his mind.

Then there came a messenger from Wu bearing a letter, which read: "You and I, sir, are both servants of Han. But instead of devoting yourself to your country and soothing the people you think only of launching wars, thus causing great suffering. Is this conduct worthy of a kindly man? Now spring with its heavy rains is at hand, and you will be wise to retire while you can. If not, you may expect a repetition of the misfortune at the Red Cliff. I hope you will consider this."

And on the back of the letter was a note in two lines: "There is no peace for me while you live."

Cao Cao read the letter and laughed. "Sun Quan is honest with me!"

He rewarded the messenger and issued orders to retreat. Placing the Prefect of Lujiang to guard Wancheng, Cao Cao led the army back to the capital.

Sun Quan returned to Moling. At a council with his advisors he said, “Cao Cao has marched north but Liu Bei is still in the west country. Should I lead the army that has just repulsed the northern men to take Jingzhou?”

“No, you should not,” said Zhang Zhao. “I know how to keep Liu Bei from returning to Jingzhou.”

Cao Cao’s army had just marched away,

Sun Quan’s thoughts then southward stray.

The scheme proposed by Zhang Zhao will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* See note in Chapter Twenty-One.

* Referring to Zhang Liang, chief advisor of Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

Yang and Gao are Slain at the Fall of Fu Pass

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan Rival with Each Other to take Luocheng

Zhang Zhao proceeded to outline his plan. “If you undertake any expedition farther west, Cao Cao will undoubtedly return and attack. I think it will be better for you to write two letters, one to Liu Zhang, saying that Liu Bei has allied himself with you to seize his territory, which will raise suspicions in his mind and cause him to attack his kinsman; and another letter to Zhang Lu, urging him to come and take Jingzhou, which will put Liu Bei at a complete impasse. That will be the moment for you to act and Jingzhou will be yours.”

Approving of his advice, Sun Quan wrote the two letters and sent them by two messengers.

In the meantime, Liu Bei had been winning the hearts of the people about Jiameng Pass, where his army stood. When he received the news of his wife’s flight and of Cao Cao’s attack on Ruxu, he called in Pang Tong and laid the matter before him. “The victor, whichever it is, will assuredly take the city of Jingzhou. What is to be done?”

"You need not worry about that city," said Pang Tong. "I do not think Wu will dare to take it so long as Zhuge Liang is there. But you can use this as an excuse. Write to Liu Zhang and say that on account of Cao Cao's attack, Sun Quan has turned to you for help and that as his country and yours are neighbors and dependent upon each other for safety you cannot refuse. Furthermore, you will assure him that there is no danger of any invasion by Zhang Lu, for he is only concerned with his own safety. Tell him that you have too few men and insufficient grain and you want him to assist you with some 30–40,000 veterans and a plentiful supply of grain. I do not think he will, but if he does give you the men and the grain, then we can think of some other plans."

Liu Bei agreed to this and sent a messenger to see the governor. On his way to Chengdu the messenger passed Fushui Pass. When the two commanders at the pass learned what Liu Bei wanted, one of them, Yang Huai, decided to go with the messenger to Chengdu. After they got to the city the letter was presented to Liu Zhang who, after reading the letter, asked Yang Huai why he had come as well.

"Because of that letter," he replied. "This Liu Bei, from the day he first entered the province, has been trying to win over the hearts of your people with a big show of kindness and virtue. He must have cherished some very evil intentions. Now he is even asking for a large troop and a great deal of supplies from you. You must refuse. To help him is like adding fuel to a fire."

"But we are brothers, how can I refuse to help him?" said Liu Zhang.

“Liu Bei is nothing but an ambitious adventurer,” cried someone. “To keep him long here in Shu is to loosen a tiger in your household. If you give him the men and supplies he asks for, you are adding wings to the tiger.”

All turned to look at the speaker and recognized him to be Liu Ba. His words threw Liu Zhang into a state of doubt and hesitation. Huang Quan, who had objected to Liu Bei’s coming from the start, also tried earnestly to dissuade him, and finally Liu Zhang decided to give only 4,000 old or weak soldiers and a paltry supply of grain. A letter to that effect was duly written and sent to Liu Bei. At the same time he gave fresh orders to Yang Huai and his colleague to keep a vigilant watch over Fushui Pass.

When Liu Bei read the letter he was furious. “I have been exerting myself in your defense and this is my reward!” he cried. “You are miserly enough to refuse my demands. How can you expect generous service?”

He tore the letter to fragments and abused the writer vehemently. The bearer of the letter fled back to the capital.

Pang Tong said, “You have been laying a great deal of stress on righteous behavior. But now that you have torn the letter, all is over between you two.”

“Then what should I do?” asked Liu Bei.

“I have three schemes ready in my mind. You may choose whichever pleases you.”

“What are your three schemes?”

“The first, and the best, is to send an army at once and seize Chengdu. The second is to capture Fushui Pass and slay the two commanders there as a first step to seizing the whole of the west country. These two officers are famous fighting men in this land and they are guarding the pass with a strong army. Pretend that you are returning to Jingzhou and they will assuredly come out to bid you farewell. Seize them and put them to death there and then, and both Fushui Pass and Fucheng will be yours. Chengdu will follow soon. The third plan, which is also the worst, is to discard this role you have been playing, go back to Jingzhou, and wait for other opportunities to arise later. But if you ponder too long and do not decide you will get into such straits that nothing can save you.”

Liu Bei replied, “Of your three schemes, I find the first too fast and the last too slow. The second scheme, which is neither, is good.”

So he wrote a letter to Liu Zhang, saying falsely that Cao Cao’s men had invaded Jingzhou; that his officers there were unable to repulse him so he had to go back to help; and that as he was in a hurry to depart he had no time to bid the governor farewell in person.

When Zhang Song learned about the content of the letter he thought Liu Bei was really going to return to Jingzhou. Much upset by the news, he wrote a letter to Liu Bei. While he was thinking about whom to send as the messenger, his brother Zhang Su, who was the prefect of a country district, came to see him. He hastened to hide the letter in his sleeve and went to receive his brother. However, his brother noticed that he was absent-minded, which he could not explain. Wine was

brought in and, as the two brothers chatted over it, the letter dropped to the floor unnoticed by Zhang Song. One of his brother's men saw it, picked it up, and gave it to his master after the banquet. The brother opened the letter and read it.

This is the letter in brief:

> What I said to you lately was not mere idle talk. Why, then, do you postpone action? The ancients valued the policy to take by force but rule by conciliation. Now our great design is well under way. Why do you want to abandon all and return to Jingzhou? How distressed I am when I hear this! As soon as you get this, attack without a moment's delay and remember that I am your ally on the inside.

"This plot of my brother's will end in the destruction of our whole clan," said Zhang Su. "I can't but report it to our lord."

So at once he went and laid the whole matter before the governor.

"I have always treated your brother so well!" said Liu Zhang, very angry.

He issued orders to arrest Zhang Song and behead him and all his household in the market place.

> Zhang was quick of comprehension, his equals but few,
> Little did he think that a letter would betray

His plot for another. But success he ne'er knew,
For himself death was his fate on that bloody day.

Having thus learned of a real conspiracy to deprive him of his heritage, Liu Zhang assembled his subordinates and asked them for their advice. Huang Quan said, "Prompt action is needed. Send people to every strategic point to tell the officers there to strengthen the defense and, above all, prevent the entrance of any one of Liu Bei's men."

Such orders were immediately sent to all strategic points.

In the meantime, Liu Bei, following Pang Tong's scheme, had marched down to Fucheng, where he halted and sent in a messenger to invite the two officers in defense of Fushui Pass to come out for a farewell meeting.

"What is the real meaning of this withdrawal?" they wondered when they got the invitation.

"This Liu Bei is fated to die," said Gao Pei. "Let us hide daggers under our robes and stab him at the meeting. That will end all our lord's troubles."

"An excellent plan," agreed his colleague.

So they two, taking some two hundred men, went out of the Fushui Pass to see off Liu Bei. Most of their men were left in the camp.

On the way down to the Fu River, Pang Tong said to his master, "You need to be on your guard against those two if

they come to bid you farewell. If they do not come, then the pass must be attacked without delay."

Just as he said this a violent gust of wind swept down the leading flag of the army, and Liu Bei asked his advisor what this portended.

"That is a warning—those two intend to assassinate you, so be on your guard."

Accordingly, Liu Bei put on double armor and girded on his sword in readiness. Presently, the two officers arrived and the army halted for the farewell meeting.

Pang Tong took Wei Yan and Huang Zhong aside and told them to see to it that none of the soldiers coming down from the pass were to return, however many there were.

The two officers of Shu, armed with hidden daggers, came up, their soldiers bearing gifts of sheep and wine. As they did not notice any visible precautions being taken against an attack, they secretly rejoiced, thinking that Liu Bei would fall an easy victim to their scheme. They were led into the tent where Liu Bei and his advisor were seated.

They said, "We hear, sir, that you are embarking on a long journey home. Therefore we have come to offer a few meager gifts to you."

With these words they filled the cup of farewell for Liu Bei, who replied: "You have a heavy responsibility to defend the pass, generals. You should drink first."

They drank. Then Liu Bei said, “I have a secret matter to discuss with you.”

So, of the men of Shu, all but the two officers were sent away from the tent. As soon as the two hundred soldiers had gone, Liu Bei shouted to his men, “Seize these two rebels!”

At once out rushed Liu Feng and Guan Ping from behind the tent. The two officers of Shu, taken aback, hastened to struggle but was each seized.

“Your lord and I are of the same house,” said Liu Bei. “Why then have you plotted against me and conspired to sow enmity between us?”

Pang Tong told his men to search the captives, and the hidden daggers were found. So he ordered both to be immediately executed. At first Liu Bei hesitated, but his advisor insisted that they deserved death for the assassination they had planned. So the two men were beheaded. Of their following, not one had been allowed to slip away.

Liu Bei summoned the soldiers to his tent, soothed them with wine and said, “Your leaders conspired to sow dissension between me and your master and were found with daggers hidden beneath their clothing. They intended to assassinate me and so have met the fate they merited. You have committed no crime and need not be alarmed.”

The soldiers thanked him for his clemency with low obeisance.

Pang Tong said to them, “Now we are going to capture the pass. I want you to lead the way and you will be richly rewarded.”

They consented. That night the army set out, preceded by the men of Shu. When they reached the pass they hailed the gate, saying, “Open the gate quickly—the officers have returned for some important business.”

Hearing the voices of their comrades, the guards on the wall tower had no suspicion of treachery and threw open the gate. In rushed Liu Bei and his army and so gained possession of Fushui Pass without shedding a drop of blood. The men of Shu all surrendered and were liberally rewarded. Then a heavy defense was established all around to maintain what they had captured.

The next day was spent in feasting to celebrate the success. At the feast Liu Bei, quite intoxicated, turned to his advisor and said, “Isn’t this a joyful occasion!”

“To employ force on the land of another and think it joyful,” replied Pang Tong, “is not what a righteous man should do.”

Liu Bei rebuked him: “In the old days King Wu of Zhou Dynasty celebrated his victory over Shang with music. Do you think he was not a righteous man? Why do you talk so unreasonably? Get out at once!”

Pang Tong laughed and withdrew from the table, while the attendants helped Liu Bei to his own chamber to rest. About midnight he awoke from his wine and then the servants told him that he had driven away his advisor from the feast. He

was at once filled with remorse. The next morning, dressed in ceremonial costume, he took his seat in the hall, summoned his advisor, and apologized for his rude behavior the night before.

"I drank too much last night and spoke rudely to you. Please do not take it to heart."

Pang Tong, who did not seem to be in the least affected by the incident, laughed and talked as usual. But Liu Bei went on, "I was the only one who slipped in speech yesterday."

"We both slipped—not just you, my lord," said Pang Tong.

Then Liu Bei laughed, too, and the two were good friends again.

When Liu Zhang heard of the doings of his kinsman he was greatly alarmed. "I did not expect that such things would really happen." He called his advisors and officers together to consider how to oppose the further advance of Liu Bei.

Huang Quan said, "Let us dispatch a force to hold Luocheng, which is the very throat of the road he must take. He may have veteran soldiers and fierce officers but he will not be able to pass through."

So the four ablest officers were assigned for this task and they were given 50,000 men. Before they set out, one of them, Liu Gui by name, said, "In the Jinping Mountains there is a Taoist recluse who calls himself 'Taoist of the Dark Void.' He has the gift of second sight and can predict a man's fate and

fortune. As we will pass that region on our way, I think we can pay him a visit and inquire about our future."

"What should one seek of a hermit when one is out to repulse an enemy?" objected his colleague, Zhang Ren.

"You are mistaken," said Liu Gui. "The sage has said that the most sincere mind is able to prophecy. We go and quiz this man of high intelligence so that we may know what to do and what to avoid."

Therefore they went to the foot of the mountains and sought the hermit's retreat from a woodcutter who, pointing to one of the highest hills, said that the recluse lived on the very summit. They climbed up to the spot where they found a small hut. At their summons a lad in Taoist garb came out to speak with them. He asked their names and conducted them to the recluse who, seated on a rush cushion, received them. They made a low obeisance, told him the reason of their coming, and asked about their future.

"How can a poor Taoist recluse know of your fortunes, good or evil?" he said.

However, after Liu Gui's repeated bows and pleas, the hermit told the lad to bring paper and ink and he wrote eight lines, which he handed to the inquirer.

A dragon and a phoenix,

Fly into the west.

But the Phoenix Fledgling shall fall to the earth,
And the Sleeping Dragon shall soar to the sky;
There shall be successes and failures,
For such is the eternal law.

See that you act when occasion offers,
Lest you descend to the Nine Springs.

Having read the oracle, Liu Gui pressed the seer to reveal to them their individual fate but he only replied, “Why ask these things? None can escape his fate.” Liu Gui ventured to question him further, but his eyelids closed as if he slumbered. Nor would he offer a word more, and the four officers took their leave and descended the hill.

“We must have faith in what he says,” said Liu Gui.

“What is to be gained by listening to the ravings of a mad man?” replied Zhang Ren.

So they continued their journey to Luocheng. When they arrived Liu Gui suggested that two of them should guard the city while the other two should station themselves beneath the shelter of some hills in front of the city. Ling Bao and Deng Xian volunteered to encamp outside. Thus, taking 20,000 men, they went to establish two camps some sixty li away, hoping to be able to keep the invaders from nearing the city.

After capturing Fushui Pass, Liu Bei began to consult his advisor as to how to seize Luocheng, the next city to be captured. Scouts had reported the arrival of the four officers sent by Liu Zhang and the two camps set up sixty li from the city. Liu Bei assembled his officers and asked them who

would go to attack the camps. The veteran Huang Zhong offered himself.

"Take your own men and go, General," said Liu Bei. "A goodly reward shall be yours if you capture the two camps."

Huang Zhong gladly thanked his lord and was just leaving to muster his men when suddenly out stood a youthful officer, saying, "General Huang is advanced in years and unsuitable to go on such an expedition. Incapable as I am, I would like to take his place."

The speaker was Wei Yan.

Huang Zhong replied, "I already have my commission—how dare you try to supplant me?"

"Because the task is beyond an old man's strength," said Wei Yan. "I was told that those two men guarding the camps are famous officers of this region. They are full of vigor and strength, and, veteran as you are, I fear you will be unable to overcome them. If you fail, our lord's great design will be hindered. Therefore I ask that I replace you—my intentions are kindly."

This reminder of his old age angered the veteran. "Old, did you say? Do you dare to compete with me?" he challenged.

"Sure I do. And our lord shall be the judge. The winner shall undertake this expedition. Do you agree?"

Huang Zhong ran down the steps and called to his men to bring his sword.

Liu Bei hastened to stop this contest and said, “I rely on both of you to take the west country. When two tigers fight one is sure to lose, and the loss of either of you is more than I could bear. Do not quarrel and be reconciled.”

“You two need not squabble,” said Pang Tong. “Since there are two camps to be taken and two officers to fight, each of you two can take your own men and seize one camp. The first to capture a camp will have rendered the greater service.”

This decision pacified them and it was decided that Huang Zhong should go against Ling Bao, and Wei Yan, against Deng Xian. After they had marched away Pang Tong recommended Liu Bei to follow them lest they should quarrel on the way. So leaving the city in the care of his advisor, Liu Bei also departed, taking with him Liu Feng, his son by adoption, and Guan Ping, his nephew by adoption. They also took 5,000 soldiers with them.

Back in his own tent, Huang Zhong issued orders for the morning meal to be prepared at the fourth watch, and for the troop to be ready to set out by daybreak, taking the road through a gully to the left of the hills.

However, his rival had secretly sent a man to spy on his movements and had set his own departure time four hours earlier, meaning he would be able to reach his destination at dawn. After his men had taken their early meal they removed the bells from the horses and put gags in their own mouths to prevent talking, and with great stealth the army stole out of the camp. Their ensigns were furled and weapons covered lest the glint of steel should betray their movement.

Thinking that he had surpassed his rival in getting an earlier start, Wei Yan dreamed as he rode along what a fine figure he would cut if he could capture both camps. So he decided to attack Ling Bao's camp before his rival could even get there and then, with his victorious troop, to also take the other camp. He at once ordered his men to deviate from their own course and take the mountain road on the left instead. By daylight he reached the camp defended by Ling Bao, the capture of which had been assigned to the old general. There he halted his men for a brief rest and then set out the drums, ensigns, and weapons.

Early as it was, yet the camp commander was on the alert, for the advancing force had been observed by his scouts. At a signal explosion the defenders of the camp attacked in full force. Wei Yan galloped up and made straight for Ling Bao. These two fought some thirty bouts when two more forces of Shu soldiers came up from two directions to join in the battle. The men of Han, as the force under Wei Yan may be called, having marched a long distance, were fatigued and could not withstand this onslaught, so they fell back. Wei Yan, hearing the confused sound of hoofs behind him, gave up his fight with Ling Bao, turned his horse, and fled. The men of Shu kept up the pursuit and the attackers were defeated and retired.

They had gone about only five li when another body of Shu men appeared from behind some hills. They advanced with beating drums. Their leader, Deng Xian, shouted to Wei Yan to surrender, but Wei Yan, whipping up his steed, fled even faster. However, the tired horse tripped and fell on its knees, throwing its rider to the ground. Deng Xian came galloping up and set his spear to slay Wei Yan. Before the spear could

strike home, twang! sounded a bowstring, and Deng Xian lay flat upon the ground.

His comrade Ling Bao was about to go to his rescue when an enemy officer came dashing down the hill, and shouted: “The veteran general Huang Zhong is here.”

With uplifted sword Huang Zhong rode toward Ling Bao, who, unable to resist him, turned his steed and galloped away. Huang Zhong pursued, and the men of Shu were thrown into chaos. So Huang Zhong was able to rescue his rival Wei Yan. He had thus slain Deng Xian and forced his way up to the gate of the camp. Once again Ling Bao came on and engaged Huang Zhong. The two had fought a dozen bouts when the rear force swarmed forward, forcing Ling Bao to retreat again. This time he made for the other camp, abandoning his own to the men of Liu Bei.

But when he drew near he saw, instead of the familiar flags of his own side, alien banners fluttering in the wind. He checked his steed and stared at the new force. The leader was a general wearing a golden breastplate and clad in a silken robe—it was Liu Bei. On his left was his adopted son and on his right, his nephew.

“Where can you go?” cried Liu Bei. “I have captured the camp.”

Now Liu Bei had led his men in the track of his two officers ready to help either in case of need. He had come across the empty, undefended camp and taken possession.

Left without refuge, Ling Bao set off along a byway to try to get back to Luocheng. He had not gone far when he fell into an ambush set by Wei Yan, and was taken prisoner. Now Wei Yan, knowing he had committed a fault that could in no way be explained away, had collected his men together; and using some captured soldiers as guides, had laid an ambush and waited. He had Ling Bao bound with cords and sent to Liu Bei.

By then Liu Bei had hoisted the flag of pardon for the men of Shu, promising to spare the life of any soldier who would lay down his weapon and take off his armor. And if his men should harm those who surrendered, they would suffer the death penalty. Furthermore, he said to the men of Shu: "You men have parents and wives and little ones at home. Those who wish to return to them are free to go and those who wish to join my army will be received."

At this proof of his generosity the sound of rejoicing filled the land.

Having made his camp, Huang Zhong came to Liu Bei and said, "Wei Yan should be put to death for disobedience."

The culprit was summoned and came, bringing with him his prisoner. Liu Bei decided that the merit of capturing an important enemy officer exempted Wei Yan from punishment and told him to thank his rescuer Huang Zhong, prohibiting them both not to quarrel any more. Wei Yan bowed his head and admitted his fault, while Huang Zhong was handsomely rewarded.

The prisoner was then taken before Liu Bei, who loosened his bonds, gave him wine to relieve his fear, and asked him if he was willing to surrender.

“How can I not submit now that you have spared my life?” he said. “And I will do more than that. Liu Gui and Zhang Ren are sworn to live or die together with me. If you will release me I will return and bring them to you and thus you will gain possession of Luocheng.”

Liu Bei gladly accepted the offer. He gave Ling Bao clothing and a horse and asked him to go to the city to carry out his plan.

“Do not let him go,” said Wei Yan. “If you do, he will never come back again.”

Liu Bei replied, “If I treat men with kindness and justice they will not betray my trust.”

So the prisoner was set free. When he reached the city and saw his comrades he made up a story, saying that he had slain many of the enemy and had escaped by mounting the steed of one of his victims. Of his capture and release he said nothing. Messengers were sent in haste to Chengdu for help.

The loss of his officer, Deng Xian, disturbed the governor greatly. He called his advisors together for counsel. Then his eldest son Liu Xun said, “Father, let me go and defend Luocheng.”

The governor agreed and then he asked a volunteer to go with his son.

Wu Yi, the governor's brother-in-law, at once offered himself. Two officers, called Wu Lan and Lei Tong, were then appointed to assist in the command. They were given 20,000 men, and the four departed for Luocheng. The officers came out of the city to welcome them and told them what had happened.

Wu Yi said, "If the enemy draws near it will be hard to drive them off again. What do you think should be done?"

Ling Bao replied, "The Fu River lies near and the current is strong. Where the enemy has set their camps the ground is the lowest. Give me 5,000 men with spades and shovels and I can turn the course of the river to flood their camps and drown Liu Bei and his army."

The plan was approved, and Ling Bao went away to prepare the necessary tools. The two officers from Chengdu were to assist him.

Leaving Huang Zhong and Wei Yan in command of the two captured camps, Liu Bei went away to Fucheng to discuss further plans with his advisor Pang Tong. At this time spies brought in a report that Sun Quan had sent an envoy to form a league with Zhang Lu and urge him to attack Jiameng Pass. Liu Bei was alarmed. "If Jiameng Pass is taken I will have lost my way of retreat and my situation will be dangerous," he said to Pang Tong. "What do you suggest, sir?"

Pang Tong turned to Meng De and said, "As a native of Shu you must be familiar with its topography. Would you like to go and keep the pass secure?"

“Let me recommend a man to accompany me and its safety will be guaranteed.”

“Who is he?” asked Liu Bei.

“He is called Huo Jun, formerly an officer under Liu Biao.”

This offer was accepted, and the two men departed.

That day when Pang Tong returned to his lodging, the doorkeeper told him that a visitor had arrived. Pang Tong went out to receive him and saw a large, tall, poorly dressed fellow whose hair had been cut short and hung upon his neck.

“Who are you, sir?” asked Pang Tong.

The visitor made no reply, but went straight into the room and lay upon the couch. Pang Tong, with rising suspicion, repeated his question several times. The visitor said, “Wait a minute and I will tell you about important things of the world.”

This answer only added to the mystery and increased the host’s suspicion, but he had wine and food brought in, which the guest ravenously devoured. Having eaten, he lay down again on the couch.

Pang Tong, greatly puzzled, suspected the man of being a spy. He sent for Fa Zheng, met him in the courtyard, and told him about the strange visitor.

“Can it be Peng Yang?” said Fa Zheng.

He went inside and looked. Immediately the visitor jumped up, saying, “My friend, I hope you have been keeping well since we parted last.”

Because two old friends meet again,

A river’s fatal flood is checked.

Who the strange visitor was will be disclosed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Zhuge Liang Mourns the Death of Pang Tong

Zhang Fei Releases Yan Yan

Fa Zheng and the visitor showed every sign of joy to see each other, clapping their hands and laughing with pleasure.

"This is Peng Yang, one of the notable figures of this land. His blunt speech had once offended Prefect Liu, who put him to shame by shaving his head, chaining him, and forcing him to toil as a slave. That is why his hair is short."

The introduction made, Pang Tong treated the stranger with all the courtesy due to a guest and asked him why he had come.

"To save a myriad of your men's lives. I will explain fully when I see General Liu."

A message was sent to Liu Bei, who came over to see the visitor.

"How many men do you have in the two camps, General?" asked the visitor, when he arrived.

Liu Bei told him.

“As a commander you cannot be ignorant of the topography of the land. Your camps over there are on the Fu River. If your enemy should divert the course of the river and hold your army in between their forces, not a single man of yours can escape.”

Liu Bei realized that this was true. The visitor continued, “The bowl of the Dipper is at present in the west and Venus stands above us, which forewarns of some misfortune. You must be very careful.”

Gratified for this warning, Liu Bei gave Peng Yang an appointment as an advisor. Then he sent a message to Huang Zhong and Wei Yan at the camps, telling them to keep a most vigilant lookout to guard against any plot to collapse the riverbank. After receiving this message the two officers decided to take turns to maintain a strict watch over the river and promised to keep the other informed as soon as enemy movement was spotted.

Away in the city, Ling Bao chose one very stormy night to carry out his scheme. Taking 5,000 men with him, he proceeded along the riverbank to seek a suitable place for the breach. But a sudden shouting to his rear told him that his enemy was on the alert, and he at once retreated. Wei Yan came in pursuit and many of Ling Bao’s men, in their haste to get away, trampled each other down. Suddenly Ling Bao and Wei Yan ran into each other, and they engaged in combat. The fight was very short, for Wei Yan soon took his opponent prisoner. The other two officers who came to assist Ling Bao were beaten off by Huang Zhong.

The prisoner was taken before Liu Bei at Fushui Pass. When he saw him, Liu Bei rebuked him severely for his ingratitude: "I treated you generously and set you free—you repaid me with betrayal. I cannot forgive you this time."

So the prisoner was beheaded and his captor was rewarded. A banquet was given in honor of Peng Yang, who had alerted them to the danger.

Soon after this a letter came from Zhuge Liang, delivered by Ma Liang, who reported that all was calm in Jingzhou and told Liu Bei not to worry. Opening the letter, Liu Bei read: "I have been making some astrological calculations. This is the last year of the cycle, and the bowl of the Dipper is in the western quarter while Venus is above Luocheng. The configuration is unfavorable to commanders and utmost caution is necessary."

Having read this and sent Ma Liang back, Liu Bei said he would return to Jingzhou and discuss the matter. But Pang Tong was opposed to this, for he thought in secret that Zhuge Liang's warning was due to a jealous desire to prevent him from gaining the glory of seizing the whole of the west country. So he said, "I also have made calculations, and the fact that the bowl of the Dipper is in the western quarter can only mean that you are to get possession of this land. As for the evil omen indicated by Venus above Luocheng, the execution of Ling Bao has already proven it. Therefore there is no need to have any doubt, my lord. Just advance boldly."

Liu Bei was persuaded and decided to follow Pang Tong's advice. He ordered the two officers Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to lead.

Pang Tong asked Fa Zheng how far it was to get to Luocheng, and the latter drew a map, which was found to agree exactly with that left by Zhang Song.

Fa Zheng said, “North of the mountains is a high road leading to the east gate of Luocheng; south of the mountains is a byway leading to its west gate. Both these roads are suitable.”

So Pang Tong said to Liu Bei, “With Wei Yan to lead the way, I will go along the southern road, while you, my lord, will advance along the high road, with Huang Zhong in the van. We will attack at the same time.”

Liu Bei replied, “I was trained as a soldier and am accustomed to by-roads. I think you should take the high road and let me take the other.”

“There will be enemy opposition on the high road and you are the best to deal with it. Let me take the byroad.”

“No, you should not do that,” said Liu Bei. “I dreamed last night of a spirit hitting my right arm with a massive iron club and it still felt painful when I woke up. Could it mean that this expedition will turn out badly?”

Pang Tong replied, “When a soldier goes to battle he may be wounded, if not killed—he accepts whichever is his fate. Should he hesitate because of a dream?”

“The real thing that troubles me is the letter from Zhuge Liang. You had better remain here and guard Fu Pass. Do you agree to that?”

Pang Tong laughed, saying, “Zhuge Liang has filled your mind with doubts. He is unwilling to let me have the merit of accomplishing a great undertaking alone. That is why he has written that letter. And that dream of yours is the result of your doubts and hesitations and not a sign of ill omen. I am prepared for any sacrifice and I mean what I say. Please say no more, my lord. We will set forth early tomorrow morning.”

So an order was issued that the morning meal was to be taken at the fifth watch and the army was to depart at dawn. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan were to take the lead, one along each road. These two set out first, and in due time Liu Bei and Pang Tong mounted and followed. Suddenly, Pang Tong’s horse shied and stumbled, throwing him off. Liu Bei jumped down and seized the horse by the bridle, saying, “Why do you ride this wretched beast?”

“I have ridden him a long time and he has never done this before,” was the reply.

“A shying steed in battle harms a man’s life,” said Liu Bei. “Ride my white horse, which is thoroughly trained and will never fail you. Give me yours.”

They exchanged horses. “I am deeply grateful for your kindness,” said Pang Tong. “I could never repay you if I were to suffer death a thousand times.”

Soon their ways diverged. After his advisor had left, Liu Bei felt ill at ease and rode on gloomily.

When the news of Ling Bao's death reached Luocheng the commanders there took counsel together. Their comrade, Zhang Ren, said, "To the southeast of the city is a byroad which is of great importance. I am going to guard that point while you must do all you can to hold the city. There must be no mistakes."

Soon news came of the advancing enemy to attack the city. Zhang Ren at once led 3,000 men to the byroad and placed them in ambush. They remained hidden and made no attack while Wei Yan passed. The main body under Pang Tong soon followed. The ambushing soldiers saw a rider on a fine white horse and pointed him out to Zhang Ren, saying that it must be Liu Bei. Zhang Ren, rejoicing greatly, gave orders to his men.

Suspecting nothing, Pang Tong hastened forward. By and by the mountain road narrowed to a defile with dense thickets on either side, and as the season was just changing from summer to fall, the foliage was thick and impenetrable. Suspicion began to rise in his heart. Reining in his steed, he asked his men if they knew the name of that place. One of the Shu soldiers, who had recently surrendered, said, "This place is called 'Slope of the Fallen Phoenix'."

Pang Tong was startled. "An evil omen for me!" he cried. "My Taoist name is 'Phoenix Fledgeling' and this place is called 'Slope of the Fallen Phoenix'. There is no luck for me here."

He immediately ordered the rearguard to retreat. But even as he gave the order, the roar of a bomb rent the air and arrows began to fly toward him, thick as swarming locusts. All the

hidden men were shooting at the rider on the white horse. And there, pierced by numerous arrows, the poor strategist Pang Tong died at the age of thirty-six.

A poem says:

Deep in the blue recesses of the hills

Lay hid the modest hut of Pang Tong.

Each village urchin knew his story,
And any village rustic told his exploits.

He knew the empire must be triply rent,
And far he traveled lonely, to and fro.

None knew that Heaven would cast down his star,
Forbidding his return in glory clad.

A song was also written about Pang Tong and Zhuge Liang:

They were two, the Phoenix and the Dragon,

And they would travel far to Shu;

But on the road thither
The Phoenix died on the mountain slope.
The wind sends off the rain,
The rain pelts with the wind.

It was the day of the Han restoration,
When Shu was attained,

But in the attainment
Only the Dragon remained.

Not only was the leader of the expedition slain, but the majority of the soldiers died in the narrow road that fatal day. Some of the men in the van escaped and ran to tell Wei Yan of the mishap, and he hurriedly halted his advance. However, the narrow byroad rendered it impossible for him to fight and what is worse, his way of retreat was cut by Zhang Ren, whose archers and crossbowmen sent down flights of arrows at his men from all the heights. Wei Yan became seriously alarmed.

Then one of the former Shu soldiers proposed taking the high road for Luocheng. Wei Yan took the advice and the army started toward the city. But in front of them arose a great cloud of dust, signaling the approach of an enemy force which turned out to be Wu Lan and Lei Tong, two of the defenders of the city. Soon, from behind came Zhang Ren in pursuit and Wei Yan was closed in between the two armies like the kernel of a nut. Wei Yan fought desperately but was still unable to get through. When his situation seemed most dangerous and hopeless, he saw signs of confusion in the rear of the enemy force that lay between him and the city. The two leaders turned in a hurry to rally their men. Wei Yan, taking advantage of this, pressed after the enemy and presently saw men of his own side, led by the veteran Huang Zhong.

“I have come to rescue you,” he shouted to Wei Yan as he came near.

Attacking from two sides, they smote Wu Lan and Lei Tong and thus got to the very walls of Luocheng. Seeing them near,

Liu Gui, who had been left to defend the city, came out to assist his colleagues. Fortunately, Liu Bei arrived at that moment and assisted them in the rear. Then Liu Bei and his two officers retreated to the two stockades. But then the situation became perilous. Not only did Zhang Ren come along a byroad to attack, but the other three defenders of the city also came on so that the stockades could not be held and Liu Bei's army had to withdraw toward Fu Pass. Now fighting and now retreating, the army of Liu Bei strove hard to get back to the pass. The men of Shu pressed the pursuit, with Zhang Ren in the lead. Near the pass, however, they were smitten by Liu Bei's adopted son and nephew, who rushed out with a fresh force of 30,000 soldiers, and not only drove back the pursuers but chased them some twenty li, besides catching a great number of horses.

When Liu Bei at last re-entered Fu Pass, weary and dispirited, he inquired about his advisor. Some of the soldiers who had escaped from the Slope of the Fallen Phoenix told Liu Bei of the sad news that the advisor and his horse were both shot to death by numerous arrows. Liu Bei, overcome with grief, turned his face toward the west and mourned bitterly. As the body of the slain advisor lay far away they instituted sacrifices to call the spirit. All the officers lamented for him.

Huang Zhong pointed out, "Now that our advisor is no more, the enemy will surely return to attack the pass." Then he suggested sending someone to Jingzhou to get Zhuge Liang to come and take over the strategy for getting possession of the western country.

His words had hardly finished when soldiers came in to report that Zhang Ren had come to challenge them outside the walls.

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan wished to go forth to fight, but Liu Bei disapproved, saying, "We have suffered a severe setback and the men are low-spirited. We must maintain a firm defense until our advisor can arrive."

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan obeyed the order and set themselves to guard the pass most vigilantly, while Guan Ping was sent to Jingzhou to take a letter to Zhuge Liang. He set forth at once and Liu Bei concerned himself with holding Fu Pass.

Let us now turn to Jingzhou. It was the seventh day of the seventh moon,* and in the evening Zhuge Liang invited all his subordinates to a banquet. Conversation turned toward their lord's undertaking in the west. Suddenly a large and brilliant meteor dropped down from the sky in the west, sending its light in all directions. It so disturbed the host that he dashed his wine cup to the ground, covered his face, and burst into tears.

"Alas! Alas!"

The guests anxiously asked him why he wept. He replied, "I knew by my calculations that the bowl of the Dipper would be in the west at this season and that things would be unfavorable to the advisor of our army. I have written to our lord, telling him about this ill omen and warning him to be extra cautious. But lo! I never expected to see the falling of the star this evening. Now Pang Tong is surely no more!"

Again he fell to weeping. "My lord has lost an arm!" he moaned.

The guests were rather disturbed, but they did not really believe that such a misfortune had happened.

“We will hear the sad news in a few days,” said Zhuge Liang.

The banquet ended sadly enough, and the guests dispersed. A few days later, while Zhuge Liang was sitting with Guan Yu and a few others, guards came in to report the arrival of Guan Ping with a letter from Liu Bei. In the letter was the sad tiding that Pang Tong had been killed on the same evening when the meteor dropped from the sky.

Zhuge Liang wailed and the others wept with him.

Then Zhuge Liang said, “I must go to help our lord as he is in trouble at Fu Pass and cannot move.”

“If you go away, who will guard this city?” asked Guan Yu. “It is of very great importance.”

“Our lord did not state plainly, but I know what was in his mind.”

Then, showing the letter to the others, Zhuge Liang added, “In his letter our lord has laid upon me the responsibility to find the right person for the defense of this city. By the fact that he has sent Guan Ping here to deliver the letter I understand that he desires Yun-chang to undertake the important task.”

Then turning to Guan Yu, he said, “I hope you will remember the Peach Garden Oath and do your best to hold the city. This task is no light one and I hope you will be very careful.”

Guan Yu accepted without hesitation. A special banquet was prepared at which the seal was to be handed over to him.

“All the responsibility rests with you, General,” said Zhuge Liang as he held the symbol of office to place it in the hands of the veteran warrior.

“When a man of honor accepts such a task he is only released by death,” replied Guan Yu.

But that ill-omened word “death” displeased Zhuge Liang, and even then he would have retracted but that his word had already gone forth. He asked Guan Yu, “Now if Cao Cao attacks what will you do?”

“Repel him with all my strength.”

“But if Cao Cao and Sun Quan attack you together, what then?”

“Divide my force and fight both.”

Zhuge Liang said, “In that case, Jingzhou would be in danger. I will give you my advice in eight words and if you remember them the city is safe.”

“What are these eight words?” asked Guan Yu.

“North, fight against Cao; south, ally with Sun.”

“These words, sir, will be engraved in my heart.”

Then the seal was placed in his hands. Zhuge Liang also appointed four advisors and four officers to assist the new commander.

Shortly after that, Zhuge Liang began to deploy his troops for the expedition into the west country. Zhang Fei, with 10,000 veteran soldiers, was ordered to take the high road and fight his way into the region west of Bazhou and Luocheng as quickly as possible. The earlier he got through, the greater his merit. Zhao Yun was to lead another force up the river and join the main army at Luocheng. Zhuge Liang himself, with his own body of men, would follow on. Among those in his train was Jiang Wan, a noted local scholar, who was then holding the office of chronicler.

Zhuge Liang and Zhang Fei set out the same day. Just before leaving, the great strategist said to Zhang Fei: "Do not take lightly the men of Shu, for there are many heroic people among them. On the march restrain your men from plunder lest the local inhabitants be against us. Wherever you are be compassionate and kindly and do not give way to anger or flog your men. Be sure to reach Luocheng as soon as possible."

Zhang Fei joyously mounted and left. He marched rapidly, and on the way all places that surrendered suffered nothing whatever. And so the army advanced toward Bazhou via the high road.

When he drew near Bazhou, spies came to report that the prefect of that place, named Yan Yan, had not hoisted the flag of surrender. They told Zhang Fei that this Yan Yan was a celebrated officer of Shu, and although he was quite old, he

had lost none of his boldness and vitality but could still pull the stiffest bow and wield the heaviest sword.

This report infuriated Zhang Fei, who ordered his men to encamp about ten li from the city. Then he sent a messenger to summon the prefect to surrender. “Tell the old rascal to give in, or I will trample down his walls and leave no soul alive.”

Now Yan Yan had never favored inviting Liu Bei into Shu. When he had first heard of Liu Zhang’s decision, he said, sighing deeply, “This is like a man alone on an unstable hill, calling a tiger to protect him.” Later, when he heard of Liu Bei’s seizure of Fu Pass, he was so angry that several times he had thought of leading his army to drive out the aggressors, but he feared lest the enemy might come his way to attack the city. One day he heard of Zhang Fei’s approach—he immediately mustered his 5,000 men to oppose him.

One of his subordinates admonished him, saying, “This Zhang Fei once scared Cao Cao’s million men at the Long Slope in Dangyang by a mere shout. Even Cao Cao himself was careful to keep out of his way. You must be careful how you oppose him. I think it is better to maintain a firm defense, relying on our high ramparts and the deep moat till hunger vanquishes our enemy. Zhang Fei has a very violent temper, and if he is provoked he vents his anger by flogging his men. If you avoid battle he will be irritated and his cruelty to his men will cause them to mutiny. That will be the moment for us to attack and the victory will be ours.”

Yan Yan thought the advice good. He therefore set his men on the walls to defend the city. Soon Zhang Fei's messenger came up to the wall and was admitted. He delivered Zhang Fei's message word for word. Yan Yan, exceedingly angry, cried, "What an impudent rascal! How dare he say such things to me? Am I, General Yan Yan, the person to surrender to a scoundrel? Go back and tell this to him."

Then he told his men to cut off the poor messenger's ears and nose. Thus mutilated, he returned to Zhang Fei. On hearing this, Zhang Fei's wrath boiled over, and grinding his teeth and glaring with rage, he put on his armor, mounted his steed, and went up close to the walls, with several hundred mounted men, to challenge the defenders of the city to battle. But the men on the walls only responded with endless abuse. Zhang Fei galloped again and again to the drawbridge, only to be driven off each time by flights of arrows. Not a single man came outside the walls to fight. As the day closed in, Zhang Fei, still fuming with wrath, returned to his own camp.

The next day Zhang Fei again led his men to the foot of the wall and challenged, and again the challenge was refused. Yan Yan shot an arrow from the tower that struck Zhang Fei's helmet. This angered him still more, and pointing at his foe, Zhang Fei cried, "I will capture you yet, you old rascal, and then I will devour your flesh."

So again at eventide he returned to camp, thwarted of his desire. On the third day Zhang Fei and his men circled around the city along the edge of the moat, hurling insults at their enemies.

It so happened that the city was set on a hill with rugged heights all around. Zhang Fei galloped up one of the hills and looked down into the city. There he saw the enemy soldiers arranged in orderly units and well-armored, all ready for battle—although none of them came out—while the civilians went to and fro carrying bricks and bringing stones to strengthen the defenses. Seeing this, Zhang Fei ordered his horsemen to dismount and his foot soldiers to sit down so as to induce his enemy to sally forth from the city. But his trick of pretended negligence was to no avail, for still they declined battle. Thus another day was lost and the army once more returned to camp. This lack of action was yet repeated for another day, which was again spent in empty abuse.

That night Zhang Fei sat in his tent trying to think out some means to overcome an enemy that steadily refused to venture from behind the walls. Presently, however, the brain behind his knitted brows conceived a plan. So the next day, instead of going out to challenge, he kept most of his men in camp and sent only a few dozen of them to howl insults and hurl abuse at the city gate. He hoped by this means to draw Yan Yan out to attack the small force. But this also failed, and he was left all day rubbing his hands with impatience. Not a man appeared outside the wall.

Foiled again, he knitted his bushy eyebrows and another ruse grew in his mind. He set his men to cut firewood and explore for new tracks, but not to challenge the enemy. After several days of this, Yan Yan, wondering what mischief was being brewed, sent out spies, dressed like Zhang Fei's firewood cutters, to mingle with them and try to discover what was afoot.

That day, when the men returned to camp, with the spies among them, they found Zhang Fei seated in his tent stamping his feet with rage and cursing his enemy. “That old rascal! This non-fight is really frustrating me!” he cried.

Then several of his men said, “General, do not worry. These last few days we have discovered a byroad by which we can sneak past this city.”

“Why didn’t you come and tell me before?” he deliberately cried in a loud voice.

“Because we have only lately discovered it,” they said.

“There is no time to lose then,” he said. “This very night let food be ready at the second watch and at the third watch we will break camp and steal away as silently as possible. I will lead the way myself and you all follow me in order.”

This order was soon announced to the whole camp. Having made sure that the preparations for the march were really being made, the spies returned into the city to tell the old general about this.

“I guessed right, then,” said Yan Yan gleefully, when the spies reported their success. “I know that bastard has no patience. Now, when he tries to sneak past he will surely put his supplies at the back and I will cut off his rear. How can he get through? What a stupid fool he is to fall thus into my trap!”

Orders were promptly given for soldiers to prepare for battle. Food was also to be ready at the second watch and the

soldiers were to move out at the third and then to hide in the thickets. When the greater part of the army had passed the choke point of the byroad and the supply wagons had arrived, then the blow would be struck.

As night deepened all of Yan Yan's men had a good meal, donned their armor, stole silently out of the city, and hid themselves among the bushes. The old general, with a dozen officers, also went out, dismounted, and waited in the woods. At about the third watch they saw Zhang Fei, spear in hand, come riding along swiftly and quietly at the head of his men. After he had gone some three or four li there came in sight the wagons.

Yan Yan gave the signal. Drums rolled and out sprang the hidden men, who at once fell on the supply wagons.

As they did so, suddenly a gong clanged at their back and along came a company of soldiers. At the same time a voice was heard shouting, "Halt, you old rascal! I have been waiting for you a long time."

Yan Yan turned his head. The leader of this troop was a tall man with a bullet-shaped head like a leopard, big round eyes, a sharp chin, and bristling tiger mustache. He was armed with a long spear and rode a jet-black steed. It was none other than Zhang Fei.

At once gongs clanged all around, and Zhang Fei's men closed in on them. Faced with his terrible opponent Yan Yan was too surprised to be able to defend himself adequately. After some ten bouts Zhang Fei purposely gave his opponent an opening and Yan Yan rushed in to cut his enemy with his

sword. But Zhang Fei evaded the blow, lunged forward, seized Yan Yan by the lace of his armor, and flung him on the ground. Soldiers came up and in a moment had him bound fast with cords.

Here it must be explained that the officer who had passed first had not been Zhang Fei at all, but someone dressed to resemble him. Knowing that Yan Yan would use the drum as the signal, he had chosen the gong as the signal for his men to fall on their enemy.

The men of Shu could make no fight, and most of them dropped their weapons and surrendered. To reach the walls of the city was now easy. After entering the gates Zhang Fei ordered his men not to hurt the people, and he put out notices to pacify the citizens.

Then Zhang Fei took his seat in the great hall, and the late commander of the city was brought before him by executioners. Yan Yan refused to kneel before his captor.

“Why did you not surrender at first?” cried Zhang Fei, angrily grinding his teeth. “How dared you try to oppose me?”

“You unrighteous invaders!” replied Yan Yan without the least sign of fear. “I will be a headless general—but not a yielding general.”

Zhang Fei, enraged, gave the order for his execution.

“Kill me as you wish, you rascal!” cried Yan Yan. “What is there to be angry about?”

His bold defiance was not lost upon Zhang Fei. Rising from his seat he went down the steps, dismissed the guards and began to loosen the prisoner's bonds. Then he gave him a robe to wear, helped him to the center seat and made a low bow, saying, "I have always known you to be a great hero, General. Please pardon me for the roughness of my speech just now."

Overcome with this kindness, Yan Yan surrendered in the end.

A graybeard ruled in western Shu,

Clear fame is his the whole world through,
As radiant sun his loyalty,
Unmatched his soul's nobility.

When captive taken rather he
Would suffer death than crook his knee.
Bazhou he ruled for many a year,
The world cannot produce his peer.

A poem was also written to praise Zhang Fei:

Valiant was he to capture Yan alive,

And with kindness he won the people's hearts.
His statues in the temples of Shu remain
His fine deeds are honored even today.

Then Zhang Fei asked him to suggest a method for overcoming Shu. Yan Yan replied, "I am but the defeated leader of a defeated force, indebted to you for my life. I

would like to offer my humble services to you. Without drawing a bow or shooting an arrow you will be able to conquer Chengdu."

Cities yield in quick succession

Because of one man's secession.

What he proposed will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* According to Chinese legend, this is the only day in a whole year when the Star of Cowherd meets his true love the Star of Weaver.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

Zhuge Liang Plans to Capture Zhang Ren

Yang Fu Borrows an Army to Destroy Ma Chao

As stated in the last chapter, Zhang Fei asked the old general to tell him how he might conquer the whole of Shu. This was his reply: "All the fortified garrisons between here and Luocheng are under my command and the officers there owe to me their commissions. The only way for me to show my gratitude is to make them all yield. Let me lead the advance and I will summon them one by one to surrender."

Zhang Fei thanked him again and again, and the march to implement this plan began. Whenever the army arrived at a garrison, the old general summoned the commanding officer to submit and there it ended. Occasionally, one would hesitate, and Yan Yan would say, "You see, even I have submitted—what can you do?"

These bloodless victories followed each other, day after day. The officers of Shu simply came at Yan Yan's bidding. Not a single battle was fought.

In the meantime, Liu Bei had received Zhuge Liang's letter in which he informed him of the date of departure and of the forthcoming meeting at Luocheng. So he assembled his

officers and said, “Our advisor and my brother left Jingzhou on the twenty-second day of the seventh month, one by water and the other by land. They will meet us here at Luocheng and then move on to Chengdu. They will be here any moment now. We must prepare for our offensive.”

Huang Zhong said, “Day after day Zhang Ren has come to challenge us, but day after day we have refused. This has worn down their fighting spirit and they will be off their guard. I propose we engineer a raid on their camp tonight. We will catch them unprepared and score a victory.”

Liu Bei agreed to try. That night they set out at the second watch in three divisions, with Huang Zhong on the right, Wei Yan on the left, and Liu Bei in command of the center force. They found their opponents unprepared as they had expected, so it was possible for them to force their way into the camp and set it on fire. The mounting flames sent the men of Shu fleeing to seek shelter in Luocheng, where they were admitted. After pursuing them for some distance Liu Bei made a temporary camp on the road.

The next day Liu Bei led his men right up to the city to besiege it. Zhang Ren kept quiet within and made no attempt to beat off the besiegers. On the fourth day Liu Bei led an attack on the west gate, sending his two warriors to attack the east. The south and north gates were left to give the besieged a chance to escape, if they would.

Now, outside the south gate of Luocheng the country was rough and hilly, while the swift Fu River ran past the north. For this reason the city could not be surrounded. From the city wall Zhang Ren watched the progress of the attack and

saw Liu Bei the whole day riding to and fro, directing the assault at the west gate. As the day waned he noticed that the attacking force showed signs of fatigue. Therefore he asked his two colleagues, Wu Lan and Lei Tong, to go out through the north gate and then turn to the east gate to attack Liu Bei's two officers, while he himself would go out by the south gate and steal round to attack Liu Bei at the west. Lest the withdrawal of men from the ramparts should be noticed by his enemy, he sent the militia up on the walls and told them to shout loudly to reinforce the rolling of the drums.

At sundown Liu Bei ordered the retreat of his army. But as the rearmost company turned about to march back to camp, there arose loud shouting from inside the city, and out at the south gate burst Zhang Ren and his force. Zhang Ren made straight for Liu Bei, who was in the middle of his army. His men were thrown into confusion. As his two officers on the east side were also attacked, they could render no help, and Liu Bei, being no match for his opponent, fled to the hills. Zhang Ren followed with a few of his men and soon got very near. It was a chase of several against one solitary rider, and as Liu Bei plied his whip he felt that the odds were much against him. Just then he saw another company of soldiers ahead, emerging from a hill path.

"An ambush in front, pursuers in rear! Surely Heaven wishes to destroy me!" he cried.

But all was not lost. As the force facing him drew near he recognized his own men, and the leader who dashed to meet him was his brother Zhang Fei.

Zhang Fei and Yan Yan had happened to take that road and, seeing the dust of battle, Zhang Fei had hastened forward by himself.

The two Zhangs soon came up with each other and they fought more than ten bouts. By this time, Yan Yan with the main body also came up, and Zhang Ren turned and fled. Zhang Fei followed and chased him as far as the city wall. The gate was opened to allow Zhang Ren to enter and at once the drawbridge was raised.

Then Zhang Fei returned to his brother. Hearing that Zhuge Liang had not yet arrived, he rejoiced, saying, "So I have the credit of earlier arrival, although he's traveling by river."

Liu Bei said, "But how is it you've come so quickly? The roads you have to travel are so precipitous that there's bound to be opposition."

Zhang Fei replied, "Well, thanks to General Yan I've taken the forty-five cities or passes on the way without the least effort. It was not by my own merit at all."

Then he related the story of the old general Yan Yan from beginning to end, and then presented the man himself.

Liu Bei said gratefully, "Without your help, General, my brother was certainly unable to come so soon." He took off the golden chain armor he was wearing and gave it to his new ally.

A banquet was being prepared when scouts came to say that Huang Zhong and Wei Yan had been fighting with the two

officers of Shu, who were later reinforced by Liu Gui and Wu Yi from the city. Unable to resist four opponents, they had fled eastward. Zhang Fei at once asked his brother to go with him to rescue them. Both went. When Liu Gui and Wu Yi saw them coming they hastened to return into the city. The other two, Wu Lan and Lei Tong, who had been following Liu Bei's men, were not aware of this new development. Soon, however, they found their way of retreat cut off by the arrival of Liu Bei and his brother and their front was attacked by Huang Zhong and Wei Yan, who had turned back and rejoined the battle. Caught between two fires and helpless, they had to surrender. Liu Bei accepted their submission and returned to his own camp near the city.

The loss of his two officers grieved Zhang Ren sorely. His remaining two colleagues proposed risking all in one desperate battle while also sending an urgent message to Chengdu to tell their master of their plight.

Zhang Ren agreed. He said, "Tomorrow I will go and challenge them. If they accept and come out to fight, I will feign retreat and lure them round to the north side of the city. As they follow me, a sortie must be made when they pass the gate, so as to cut their army in two. We ought to overcome them in this way."

"Let me lead the sortie," said Wu Yi. "General Liu can stay to help our lord's son guard the city."

This also was agreed to. The next morning, Zhang Ren went out to challenge, his men waving flags and shouting furiously. At once Zhang Fei took up the challenge and rode out. Without a word he galloped up to Zhang Ren and engaged

him. After half a score of bouts Zhang Ren, pretending to be worsted, turned and fled around to the north of the city. Zhang Fei pursued him with all speed. Then, as he passed the gate, Wu Yi rushed out to fight—instantly Zhang Ren turned back to attack, so that Zhang Fei was between two forces and unable to get clear.

Zhang Fei seemed to be in a perilous state. But at this very moment a body of soldiers came up from the riverside and a fierce warrior rode straight for Wu Yi, and in the first bout made him prisoner. His men were then easily forced back and Zhang Fei was free. It was Zhao Yun who had so opportunely appeared.

"Where is our chief advisor?" asked Zhang Fei.

"He's arrived—I think he's already seen our lord," replied Zhao Yun.

The prisoner was taken to the camp, where Zhuge Liang and the others were already seated. Zhang Fei dismounted and went in to greet him.

Greatly surprised, Zhuge Liang asked, "How come you arrived before me?"

This time it was Liu Bei who told the whole story of Zhang Fei's prudence and sagacity in securing the friendship of Yan Yan. Zhuge Liang congratulated him and said, "It is really your good fortune that General Zhang has now become such a good strategist."

When the prisoner was taken in, Liu Bei asked him if he would surrender.

He replied, “There is no reason why I should not, now that I am a prisoner.”

Pleased, Liu Bei himself loosened his bonds. Zhuge Liang began to question him about the defense force in the city. Wu Yi told him the names of the officers in the city, adding, “Liu Gui does not count for much, but Zhang Ren is a man of immense talent and courage and must not be treated lightly.”

“We will capture Zhang Ren first before we get the city,” said Zhuge Liang.

“There is a bridge in the east—what is it called?”

“The Golden Goose.”

Zhuge Liang rode over to the bridge and scrutinized the neighborhood.

After his return to camp, he summoned Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to whom he said, “To the east of the city is a bridge called the Golden Goose, and about five li south of this there is a dense growth of reed and sedge, which will afford excellent shelter for an ambush. Wei Yan, you are to place a thousand spearmen on the left. When the enemy comes, attack only the riders. Huang Zhong, you are to lay an ambush on the right with a thousand swordsmen and attack only the horses.”

Then turning to Zhang Fei he said, “When Zhang Ren has lost most of his men and horses, he will flee by the byroad east of the hills. You are to lie in wait for him there and capture him.”

Next, Zhao Yun was called and sent to lie in ambush to the north of the bridge, which he was to destroy as soon as the enemy had crossed. He added, “Then you are to take up a position in the north to prevent Zhang Ren from getting away through that direction. Forced to take the road to the south, his destruction is inevitable.”

Having made these arrangements, Zhuge Liang himself went to challenge Zhang Ren and try to bring him to battle.

At that time two more officers had arrived from Chengdu to assist Zhang Ren. One of them was ordered to help Liu Gui defend the city while the other, Zhuo Ying by name, was to lead the rearguard and move out with Zhang Ren, who was to command the vanguard.

Zhuge Liang guilefully led out a troop of disorderly-looking soldiers, whom he drew up to array against Zhang Ren’s army. He himself, wearing his headpiece and toying with a fan, took his seat in a small four-wheeled carriage. About a hundred horsemen holding rods formed his escort. Having crossed the bridge, Zhuge Liang halted and, pointing to Zhang Ren, he said, “Even Cao Cao, with his million men, fled at the mere mention of my name. Who do you think you are that dares to fight with me and not surrender?”

Zhang Ren, seeing the disorderly soldiers in front, sneered as he sat on his steed: “People talk of Zhuge Liang’s superhuman military genius—I say his reputation is false.”

With that he waved his spear and at this signal all his men surged forward with him to attack. At this, Zhuge Liang left his carriage, mounted a horse and crossed the bridge to flee. Zhang Ren impetuously pursued and dashed over the bridge of the Golden Goose. It was only when he had reached the other side that he saw a body of enemy soldiers on either hand. Then he knew that he had been led into a trap.

As soon as he had crossed the bridge the two bodies of soldiers attacked. Zhang Ren hurriedly turned back but the bridge had already been destroyed as planned. He wanted to turn away to the north, but Zhao Yun had spread out his men that way. So he had to turn southward to follow the course of the river. He presently reached the place where grew the reeds and sedges. Out came Wei Yan and his spearmen, who thrust fiercely at the riders while Huang Zhong, with his swordsman, crippled the horses. The cavalrymen and their horses were soon lying on the ground. The foot soldiers, intimidated by the fall of their colleagues, dared not advance. Zhang Ren, followed by a few lucky horsemen, fled toward the hills where, however, he ran into Zhang Fei. Zhang Ren tried to escape but was surrounded by enemy soldiers and Zhang Fei, uttering a mighty roar, fell upon him and captured him. Seeing Zhang Ren a victim of the ruse, his rearguard commander, Zhuo Ying, had turned toward Zhao Yun and surrendered. When Zhang Ren was led in by Zhang Fei, Zhuge Liang was seated beside his lord.

“Why have you held out so long after all the other officers of Shu have yielded?” asked Liu Bei.

“Can a loyal officer take a second master?” cried Zhang Ren fiercely, his eyes glaring with hate.

“You do not know the times—submission means life.”

“Even if I submit today, I will not submit in future. You had better slay me.”

Liu Bei was inclined to mercy, but Zhang Ren was irreconcilable and kept up a stream of furious abuse. So at last Zhuge Liang ordered his execution to enable him to earn a reputation of loyalty.

A poem says:

> No second lord the heroic martyr knows,
>
> Though dead, still lives the warrior loyal and bold.
> Clear shines his honor as doth the heavenly moon
> That nightly lights the ramparts of Luocheng.

Liu Bei sighed deeply for Zhang Ren’s death and ordered his men to bury him beside the bridge of the Golden Goose, where all the passersby would be reminded of his loyalty.

The next day the army moved on to Luocheng, with Yan Yan and the other officers who had submitted leading the way. At the gate they called upon those inside to surrender so that the city residents could be saved from utter destruction. From the wall, Liu Gui let out a torrent of abuse at the traitors. Yan

Yan was just going to take his bow to shoot at him when Zhang Yi, a native of Wuyang, cut Liu Gui down and opened the gate for the invaders. The city yielded.

As Liu Bei entered the city by one gate, Liu Xun, son of Liu Zhang, escaped by another gate and set off for Chengdu. Liu Bei set about allaying the fears of the local inhabitants and rewarding those who had helped in the capture of the city.

"Now that Luocheng is taken, the seizure of Chengdu is only a matter of time," said Zhuge Liang. "However, there may be some trouble in the outlying districts, which needs to be attended to first. You can send Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei, with some of those who have recently joined us, into the country around to maintain order and repress any uprising that may occur. When they have completed their tasks they are to lead their troops at once to Chengdu, where the army will be assembled."

The two warriors went their separate ways, and then Zhuge Liang began to make careful inquiries concerning the road to Chengdu. He was told that the only place where they could expect any serious defense was Mianzhu. Once they had seized this town, the capital lay at their mercy.

As Zhuge Liang was considering his next military maneuver, Fa Zheng made a suggestion: "With the fall of Luocheng, the whole of Shu will not be able to hold out for long. As our lord desires to win over the people with kindness and justice I think it better to suspend the military action. Let me write a letter to Liu Zhang and explain the grave consequences to him. He will surrender at our call."

“Good idea,” said Zhuge Liang.

The letter was written and sent to Chengdu.

Liu Xun, son of the governor, presently reached Chengdu and told his father of the loss of Luocheng. The governor, distressed, at once called his counselors together, and one of them said: “Although Liu Bei has been successful and captured cities and towns, yet his own army is but small and the former Shu officers and men are not truly with him. Besides, he depends upon the land for his grain, for he has no proper supplies. Therefore our best plan is to remove the people of Baxi and Zitong to the west of the Fu River, burn all the granaries, fortify the city, and let starvation defeat him. When they come we will reject all challenges to battle and in a hundred days his men will go off of their own accord. That will be our chance to capture Liu Bei.”

But Liu Zhang was not in favor of this plan. “No, I do not like this,” he said. “I have only heard of opposing invaders to bring peace to the people but I have never heard of disturbing the people to oppose invaders. Your plan is not one to secure our safety.”

Just at the moment the letter from Fa Zheng arrived. It was opened and the governor read: “I was sent to Jingzhou to negotiate an alliance some time ago, but the opposition of those about you has resulted in the present impasse. However, the ruler of Jingzhou still remembers old friendships and is mindful of the ties between kinsmen. If Your Lordship could reverse your policy and come over to his side, I think you would be generously treated. I hope you will consider this most carefully.”

Liu Zhang flew into a rage. Tearing the letter to fragments, he began to abuse its writer as an ungrateful traitor who sold his master for his own gains, and drove the bearer of the letter from his presence. He at once sent an army under the leadership of Fei Guan, his wife's brother, to reinforce the defense in Mianzhu. Fei Guan recommended as his assistant a warrior called Li Yan and the two mustered 30,000 men to march to the city in concern.

At this juncture an official advised Liu Zhang to seek aid from his enemy Zhang Lu in Hanzhong. Liu Zhang was surprised at this proposal and said, "There is a feud between our two families. Do you think he will help me?"

"He may be an enemy, but since Liu Bei is in possession of Luocheng the situation is extremely dangerous for both of you. As the saying goes, 'When the lips are gone the teeth are cold.' If you clearly explain the peril to him he will come to our help."

So Liu Zhang wrote a letter and sent an envoy to seek assistance from his former enemy.

Let us now return to the young warrior Ma Chao and trace his fate in the far west. Two years had elapsed since he was defeated by Cao Cao and gone over to the Xiang tribesmen of Longxi. He had made friends with them and with their aid had conquered most portions of Longxi. His expeditions had been very successful, the officials opening their gates at the first summons. Only Jicheng had withstood, but even this was on the point of yielding. The governor of the district had sent many urgent appeals for help to Xiahou Yuan, who, however, would do nothing without his master's order. The governor

was in despair, and began to consider surrender. However, when he consulted his subordinates on this, one of them, called Yang Fu, earnestly opposed yielding, saying they could not surrender to a rebel.

"If not, what is there to hope for?" asked the governor in despair.

Although Yang Fu pleaded with him to hold out, it was useless—the governor rejected his advice, opened the city gates, and bowed to Ma Chao in submission.

"You only yield now as the last resource," cried Ma Chao, angry at the delay he had suffered. "This is no real submission."

So he ordered to be put to death the governor and all his family to the number of two score.

But when he was told that Yang Fu had urged his master to hold out and therefore should be executed, Ma Chao was opposed to this and said that Yang Fu had but done his duty. To show his appreciation of Yang Fu's sense of loyalty he even employed him and two of his friends in his own army. These two friends were named Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu.

One day Yang Fu went to his new chief and said, "My wife has died in Lintao—I wish to take leave for two months to bury her."

Therefore he was granted leave and went away. But instead of going home he went to see his maternal cousin Jiang Xu, who was in command at Licheng and whose mother, then an old

lady of eighty-two, was Yang Fu's aunt. When Yang Fu saw her he said, in tears: "The city I had to defend is lost; my master is dead; and yet I have survived him. I am ashamed to look you in the face. Now this Ma Chao has slain the governor without reason, and every man in the region hates him. Yet my cousin sits still and does nothing about this. Is this fitting conduct for a state servant?"

He wept bitterly. The old lady, moved by his grief, called in her son and reproached him, "You are also to blame for the death of the governor." Then turning once more toward Yang Fu, she asked, "But you have surrendered to Ma Chao and, more than that, you have entered his service. Why do you want to destroy him now?"

Yang Fu replied, "I did so only to preserve my miserable life till I can avenge my master."

"But Ma Chao is terribly strong and difficult to destroy," said his cousin.

"Not very difficult," replied Yang Fu, "for though he is bold he is not resourceful. I have already planted two friends by his side, and they would help us against him if you would only raise a force."

"What is to the point of delay?" said the old lady. "Is there anyone who will not have to die? To perish in the way of loyalty and righteousness is to die a worthy death. Do not worry about me. If you do not listen to your cousin, I will die at once so that you may be free to make up your mind."

There was now no excuse for delay, and Jiang Xu had to act. He summoned two of his officers, Yin Feng and Zhao Ang, and took counsel with them.

Now Zhao Ang had a son, Yue, who was an officer in the army of Ma Chao. Although he had consented to take part in the action against his son's chief, he was very upset in his heart. He returned home and said to his wife, "I have today been led into a scheme to destroy Ma Chao and avenge the governor. But our son is there in his service, and he will certainly put him to death as soon as he hears that we are against him. What is to be done?"

But his wife replied angrily, "Should anyone grudge even his own life to avenge the death of his lord? How much less a son? If you let the thought of your son stay your hand then I will die at once."

This decided the matter, and without further discussion Zhao Ang decided to join the expedition. The army was soon on its way. Jiang Xu and Yang Fu went and camped at Licheng; the other two, Yin Feng and Zhao Ang, camped by the Qi Mountains. The wife of Zhao Ang sold her jewels and went in person to her husband's camp to reward his soldiers.

The fears of Zhao Ang concerning the fate of his son were only too soon justified. At the first news of the army marching against him, Ma Chao beheaded the young man. A force was sent to Licheng, and the men under Jiang Xu and Yang Fu went out to oppose it. The two leaders on the avenging side went to battle dressed in mourning white. They railed at Ma Chao, calling him a traitor, wicked and rebellious.

Ma Chao angrily dashed at them, and the fight began. But how could these two have the least hope to resist Ma Chao? Badly smitten, they turned to flee. Ma Chao pursued them. However, the situation soon turned sour for the victor, as he heard the shouting of soldiers behind him and found that he was attacked in the rear by another force. Thus he was between two forces and had a double battle to fight. As he turned toward this new enemy, those he had been pursuing returned again to the fight. And while engaged with these two, there suddenly appeared a third force under Xiahou Yuan, who had just received orders from Cao Cao to combat Ma Chao.

Attacks on three sides simultaneously proved too much for Ma Chao, who was compelled to flee, his force in utter confusion. He retreated all night and at dawn reached his own city of Jicheng. But when he hailed the gate, a flight of arrows was the response. Soon after, the two friends of Yang Fu, Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu, appeared and reviled him from the ramparts above. More than this, they dragged his wife up upon the wall, murdered her before his very eyes, and threw the bloody body at his feet. They followed this cruel act by the murder in like manner of his three young sons and more than a dozen members of his family. And all their dead bodies were flung from the wall.

Rage and grief filled Ma Chao's bosom—he almost fell from his steed. But little time was allowed for him to grieve, for Xiahou Yuan was nearly upon him. Knowing that he could not oppose this massive force with any chance of victory, he dared not fight long, but made a dash with his two bold officers to cut a way through the enemy line. Presently they fell upon Yang Fu and Jiang Xu, and after a brief battle they

pressed on with their escape. In the same way they forced a passage through Yin Feng's and Zhao Ang's troops. However, they lost most of their few followers, and at the end only some three score remained.

At about the fourth watch they came to Licheng. In the darkness the gate guards, thinking that their master Jiang Xu had returned, opened the gate and unwittingly admitted the enemy. Once in the city the slaughter began from the south gate, and everyone, soldier or civilian, was slain. At the residence of Jiang Xu they dragged forth his aged mother. She showed no sign of fear, but reviled Ma Chao. In his anger he took his sword and slew her himself. Then they went to the houses of Yin Feng and Zhao Ang and slew all they found inside. The only person who escaped the massacre was the wife of Zhao Ang, who had accompanied her husband with the army.

But the city proved no place of safety. Xiahou Yuan with his army appeared the following day, and Ma Chao fled before him to the west. But before he had gone twenty li he came face to face with another force drawn up in battle array, led by Yang Fu. Grinding his teeth with hatred, Ma Chao set his spear and rode directly at Yang Fu, while his two officers, Ma Dai and Pang De, engaged the rear. Yang Fu, though aided by his seven cousins, was overcome. In no time all the seven cousins were slain while he himself was wounded in five places, but he still struggled on.

At that moment, however, Xiahou Yuan with his large army came up from behind and Ma Chao was again forced to escape. His followers were now reduced to less than ten, and these few continued to flee.

Cao Cao's general, Xiahou Yuan, restored order in the district, after which he appointed Jiang Xu and the others to defend it. The wounded man, Yang Fu, was sent to the capital in a carriage. When he arrived he saw Cao Cao, who offered him the title of marquis. But Yang Fu declined the honor, saying, "I have neither the credit of sustaining a successful defense nor the merit of dying a martyr in the fall of the city. Death should be my punishment. How could I accept the honor?"

Cao Cao praised him and did not insist.

Having escaped from their pursuers, Ma Chao and his few followers decided to seek shelter with Zhang Lu in Hanzhong. Zhang Lu received them gladly, for he thought with such a bold warrior in his service he could certainly get possession of Yizhou in the west and repel Cao Cao in the east. To secure his loyalty, he even thought of making Ma Chao his son-inlaw. But when he discussed this with his men, one of them, called Yang Bo, objected.

"Remember how he brought misfortune to his wife and family. How could you give your daughter to him?" said Yang Bo.

Zhang Lu agreed and thus abandoned this idea. But a certain busybody told Ma Chao about all this and the latter, greatly annoyed, began to nurture the thought of destroying Yang Bo. Meanwhile, Yang Bo and his brother Yang Song also conspired to destroy Ma Chao.

At this time Liu Zhang's envoy arrived in Hanzhong, begging for assistance against the invader Liu Bei. Zhang Lu refused.

Soon, another envoy was sent by Liu Zhang on the same errand. He first went to see Yang Song and pointed out to him the inter-dependence of their two sides, standing next to each other like the lips and teeth. He further promised that his master was willing to hand over twenty towns if aid was offered. These words won over Yang Song, who led him to see his master. The envoy repeated his argument and laid the matter before him so cogently that Zhang Lu promised his help.

One of Zhang Lu's officers tried to dissuade him by pointing out the old enmity between him and Liu Zhang, but another man suddenly stood out and said, "Useless I may be, but if you will give me some troops I will capture this Liu Bei and force Liu Zhang to yield the twenty towns he has promised."

The land's true lord goes west and then

Hanzhong sends forth its bravest men.

Who made this bold offer will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Ma Chao Fights a Great Battle at Jiameng Pass

Liu Bei Assumes Governorship of Yizhou

It was Ma Chao who rose and said, “I have been the recipient of much kindness from you, sir, which I feel I can never repay adequately. Now let me lead an army to take Jiameng Pass, capture Liu Bei, and force Liu Zhang to yield twenty towns to you.”

This offer delighted Zhang Lu, who sent the envoy back first through a byroad and then assigned an army of 20,000 men for Ma Chao to lead. As Pang De happened to be ill and so was unable to take part in the expedition, Yang Bo was sent in his place. A date was chosen for the army to start. Meanwhile, the messenger sent by Fa Zheng to Chengdu had returned. He told Liu Bei that Liu Zhang had been advised to destroy the crops and the granaries, move away the people, and maintain a strong defense. This news alarmed Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang greatly, for it would be a grave danger to them. However, Fa Zheng was more optimistic.

“Do not be anxious,” he said. “Though the plan is lethal, it will not be accepted by Liu Zhang.”

Surely enough, very soon they heard that Liu Zhang, unwilling to cause the people so much disturbance, had refused to accept the advice. It was a great relief to Liu Bei.

Zhuge Liang said, "Now let us try to capture Mianzhu quickly. When that town is seized, Chengdu will be as good as ours."

Therefore he sent Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to advance first. When Fei Guan, commander at Mianzhu and brother-in-law to Liu Zhang, heard of their advance, he ordered Li Yan to go out and confront them, and the officer went out with 3,000 men. The two sides being arrayed, Huang Zhong rode out and engaged his opponent. They fought about fifty bouts but neither was able to claim victory over the other, and so Zhuge Liang ordered his men to clang the gongs to cease the battle. When Huang Zhong got back he said to the advisor, "Sir, why did you sound the gong of withdrawal just as I was going to capture my opponent?"

"Because I saw that he would not be overcome by mere force. Tomorrow when you fight with him, pretend defeat and then lead him into the hills. There will be an ambush awaiting him."

Huang Zhong agreed to try this ruse, and so the next day he accepted Li Yan's challenge when it was offered. After about ten bouts he and his men pretended to be worsted and fled. Li Yan pursued and was quickly lured into the hills. Suddenly, danger flashed into his mind and he hurriedly turned to go back. But there he found Wei Yan's men blocking his way, while Zhuge Liang shouted down from a hilltop: "You had better yield—if not, there are bows and crossbows on both

sides of you, ready to take your life to avenge the death of our Pang Tong."

Li Yan hastened to dismount, threw aside his armor, and yielded. Not a man of his was hurt. He was conducted to Liu Bei, whose affable attitude immediately won his heart, so he offered to try to persuade Fei Guan to forfeit his allegiance to Liu Zhang.

"Though he is related to Liu Zhang, he and I are very close friends. Let me go and persuade him."

Li Yan was thus sent back to the city to induce his friend to come over to Liu Bei's side. He talked to his friend so eloquently about the kindness and virtue of Liu Bei that Fei Guan was convinced. Throwing open the city gates he, too, surrendered to the invaders.

As soon as Liu Bei entered Mianzhu he began preparations for the seizure of the capital of the west country. While thus engaged he received an urgent message to the effect that Ma Chao was making a fierce attack on Jiameng Pass and that it would certainly be lost if help was not sent quickly.

"We need Yi-de or Zi-long for this," remarked Zhuge Liang.

"But Zi-long is away," said Liu Bei. "However, Yi-de is here. Let us send him now."

"Do not say anything, my lord. Let me stir him up so that he will fight his best."

As soon as Zhang Fei heard of Ma Chao's presence at Jiameng Pass he went to see his brother, shouting loudly, "I must take my leave, brother. I'm off to fight Ma Chao."

Of this passionate burst of courage, Zhuge Liang pretended as if he had not heard a word. Turning to Liu Bei, he said, "That Ma Chao is invading Jiameng Pass and we have no one to drive him back unless we get Yun-chang from Jingzhou. He is the only one who can counter Ma Chao."

"Why do you despise me, sir?" cried Zhang Fei. "Didn't I once drive back a whole army of Cao Cao's? Do you think I can't deal with a stupid fellow like Ma Chao?"

Zhuge Liang said, "Well, Yi-de, last time you succeeded in holding the Long Slope Bridge against Cao Cao's large army because he was in doubt. If he had known our real strength, you would not have fared so well. Now this Ma Chao is famous throughout the country for his valor. His six battles at the Wei Bridge forced Cao Cao to cut short his beard and throw away his robe. He very nearly slew him, too. This is no light task, and even your brother might fail."

"I will go right now, and if I don't overcome this fellow, I'm willing to take the consequences."

"All right," said Zhuge Liang. "If you will put that down in writing, you may lead the vanguard."

Turning to Liu Bei, he continued, "My lord, you can lead another division to support him and I will stay here and guard this town till Zi-long returns."

“I also want to go,” volunteered Wei Yan.

Wei Yan was allowed to go ahead of Zhang Fei with five hundred light cavalrymen as scouts. Liu Bei was to lead the rearguard. The three forces soon left the city for Jiameng Pass.

Wei Yan and his scouts arrived first at the pass, where he fell in with Yang Bo. They engaged—but after a few bouts Yang Bo fled in defeat.

At this success Wei Yan was seized with ambition and, hoping to snatch the credit that would fall to Zhang Fei, he pursued. Presently he came across a body of soldiers all drawn up, the commander being Ma Dai. Wei Yan, thinking it was the redoubtable Ma Chao, rode toward him, whirling his sword. In less than ten exchanges Ma Dai started to run away, and Wei Yan again followed. However, Ma Dai suddenly turned back and shot an arrow, which wounded his pursuer in the left arm. Wei Yan gave up the chase and turned to flee. This time Ma Dai came after him and chased him nearly up to Jiameng Pass.

Here Ma Dai was suddenly confronted by a warrior with a thunderous voice who dashed down from the pass as on a flying steed.

It was Zhang Fei, who had just arrived. Hearing the noise of battle below the pass he had come to find out what it meant and saw Wei Yan hit by an arrow. Vaulting into the saddle, he rushed off to his rescue. Then he shouted to Ma Dai, “Who are you? Tell me your name first, then fight.”

“I am Ma Dai of Xiliang.”

“So you are not Ma Chao,” said Zhang Fei in disappointment. “Go away quickly. You are no match for me. Tell Ma Chao to come himself, and say that Zhang Fei of Yan is here.”

“How dare you treat me with contempt?” cried Ma Dai in hot anger, and he came galloping up with his spear set to thrust. But after about ten bouts he had to flee. Zhang Fei was about to pursue when a rider came up to him hastily, crying, “Don’t pursue, brother.” The rider was Liu Bei, and Zhang Fei stopped. The two returned together to the pass.

“I know your impulsive temper, and so I followed you. Since you’ve got the better of him you should take a good rest tonight and recuperate for the fight tomorrow with Ma Chao.”

The rolling of drums at dawn the next day declared the arrival of Ma Chao. Liu Bei looked down at him from the pass: there was Ma Chao emerging from the shade of his great standard, clad in a white robe and silver armor, with a lion helmet on his head and a belt with a wild beast clasp around his waist. Just as his attire was uncommon, so were his looks.

Liu Bei gasped admiringly. “What a fine looking young warrior! No wonder people call him Handsome Ma Chao.”

Zhang Fei wanted to go down at once, but his brother checked him, saying, “No, not yet. You must avoid the keenness of his fighting ardor.”

Thus from below Ma Chao challenged Zhang Fei, while above Zhang Fei fretted at not being allowed to swallow Ma

Chao up at one gulp. Time and again Zhang Fei wanted to set out, but each time his brother checked him. And so it continued till past midday, when Liu Bei, noticing signs of fatigue and weariness among Ma Chao's men, decided that it was the moment to let Zhang Fei go to his great fight. He picked out five hundred cavalrymen to accompany his brother and let the party go.

Ma Chao, seeing Zhang Fei coming with his force, signaled with his spear to his men to retreat the distance of a bowshot, and Zhang Fei's riders halted. Liu Bei and the other men at the pass also came down to take their places as onlookers. Zhang Fei set his spear and rode out.

"Do you know who I am?" shouted Zhang Fei. "I am Zhang Fei of Yan."

Ma Chao replied contemptuously, "My family has been noblemen for many generations. I certainly do not know any rustic dolts."

This reply enraged Zhang Fei. In a moment the two steeds were rushing toward each other, and the two men raised their spears. A hundred bouts were fought but neither could prevail over the other.

"A veritable tiger of a general," sighed Liu Bei.

Fearing that the fight might go amiss for Zhang Fei, he sounded the gong to signal the end of the combat. And each drew off to his own side. Zhang Fei rested his steed for a time, then, casting off his helmet and wrapping a turban about

his head, he mounted and rode out again to resume the fight. Ma Chao also came out, and the duel continued.

Liu Bei, anxious for his brother's safety, put on his armor and went down to witness the combat. Taking his position close to the scene of the battle, he watched till they had fought another hundred bouts, and then as both seemed to wax fiercer than ever, he again gave the signal to cease the fight.

Both drew off and each returned to his own side. It was then getting late, and Liu Bei said to his brother: "You must be careful—he's a terrible opponent. Let's go back to the pass now and you can fight him again tomorrow."

But as Zhang Fei's lust for combat burned, he refused to listen to his brother's advice.

"No," he shouted, "even death will not make me go back!"

"But it's late—you can't go on fighting," said Liu Bei.

"Let them bring torches, and we'll have a night battle," said Zhang Fei.

Ma Chao having mounted a fresh steed, now rode out and shouted, "Do you dare to fight a night battle, Zhang Fei?"

Zhang Fei, provoked to even greater excitement, hastily changed horses with his brother, and rushed forth.

"If I do not capture you, I will not go back to the pass," said Zhang Fei.

“And if I do not overcome you, I will not return to the camp,” said Ma Chao.

Both sides cheered. They lit hundreds of torches till it seemed as light as day, and the two great warriors went out to fight. At the twentieth bout Ma Chao turned his steed to go.

“Where are you going?” shouted Zhang Fei.

Now Ma Chao, seeing he could not win in direct combat, decided to try a ruse. By a false flight he intended to draw Zhang Fei into pursuit. Then secretly taking out a copper hammer, he suddenly turned and threw it straight at his opponent. Zhang Fei, who had been on his guard when he saw his rival taking flight, dodged just in time, and the hammer flew narrowly past his ear. Then Zhang Fei turned his horse to go back but Ma Chao came to pursue. Zhang Fei pulled up and, taking out his bow and arrow, shot at Ma Chao who also dodged, and the arrow flew by. Then each returned to his own side.

Liu Bei rode to the front of his battle line and called out to his opponent: “Ma Chao, I believe in treating people with kindness and justice. You can withdraw and rest. I will not take advantage of your repose to pursue or attack.”

Ma Chao, hearing these words, ordered his men to withdraw, he himself guarding the rear. Gradually his army retreated and Liu Bei also drew his army back to the pass.

Early the next day Zhang Fei was once more going down the pass to fight when they told him that the chief advisor, Zhuge

Liang, had arrived. Liu Bei went to receive him, and Zhuge Liang at once began to speak of Ma Chao.

"He is the most terrifying warrior of the age—if he and Yi-de fight a desperate battle, one of the two will inevitably suffer. So I have left Mianzhu in the care of Zi-long and come as quickly as I can. With a little ruse I think I can bring Ma Chao over to our side."

"He is so brave and I do admire him," said Liu Bei. "How can we win him over?"

Zhuge Liang said, "Well, Ma Chao is now in the service of Zhang Lu, who greatly desires the title of Prince of Hanning. Among his subordinates there is one called Yang Song whom I know is open to bribery. We can send a person secretly to see him and bribe him with gold and silver so as to win his support. This done, we will write to Zhang Lu and tell him that your fighting with Liu Zhang for Yizhou is actually in his interest; that he should not listen to slanders against you; and that you will petition the Emperor to confer on him his coveted title. This will make him order Ma Chao to return, and when that happens I will find a means of winning him over."

Liu Bei accordingly wrote the letter and sent it by the hand of Sun Qian, together with gold and pearls for the greedy Yang Song. Sun Qian went by secret roads to see Yang Song, to whom he explained his mission. Greatly pleased with the gifts Yang Song quickly introduced him to his master.

“How can Liu Bei petition the throne to confer on me the rank of prince when he is but a general himself?” asked Zhang Lu, when he understood the offer and its conditions.

“He is an uncle of the Emperor,” said Yang Song. “He is exactly the right person to present such a memorial.”

Zhang Lu assented. He sent a messenger to tell Ma Chao to cease fighting. In the meantime, Sun Qian remained at Yang Song’s house, waiting for further news. Before long, the messenger came back with a reply from Ma Chao saying that he could not cease fighting since he had not yet triumphed. A second, and then a third, messenger was sent, but returned with a similar response.

“This Ma Chao is untrustworthy,” said Yang Song. “His unwillingness to withdraw can only mean he wants to rebel.”

Then Yang Song began to set a rumor afloat that Ma Chao desired to establish himself as the ruler of the west so as to avenge the death of his father, and would no longer be content with a subordinate rank. The false rumor came to the ear of Zhang Lu, who again turned to Yang Song for advice.

Yang Song said, “You can take two measures. On the one hand, send someone to tell Ma Chao that if he wants to fight on, you will allow him a month on the condition that he accomplish three things within that period: the capture of Yizhou, the head of Liu Zhang, and the repulse of Liu Bei’s troops. If he can do all these he will be rewarded. Otherwise he will be put to death. On the other hand, you must strengthen the defense at various passes and cities to guard against his possible rebellion.”

Zhang Lu took his advice and hence a messenger was sent to declare the three conditions to Ma Chao.

Ma Chao was greatly shocked. “How come things change so quickly?” he said in distress.

He discussed the matter with his cousin, Ma Dai, and the two decided to suspend fighting and withdraw. Hearing this, Yang Song started another rumor that Ma Chao’s return with an army meant rebellion. Hence all the strategic points on the homeward road were closely guarded to deny him entrance. Thus Ma Chao, unable either to fight or to retreat, could see no way out of his plight.

At this moment Zhuge Liang said to his lord, “Now Ma Chao is in a fix. I am going to his camp, and with my three-inch-long tongue, I will persuade him to come over to our side.”

“But I do not like you to run such a risk. You are my most trusted advisor—if anything happened to you, what should I do?”

Zhuge Liang, however, was set upon going but Liu Bei persistently refused. At this juncture it was announced that Zhao Yun had sent a letter by the hand of someone who wished to yield to Liu Bei. The man turned out to be Li Hui of Jianning, who had formerly advised Liu Zhang not to let Liu Bei enter the west.

“You once pleaded with your master to keep me out—why do you want to join me now?”

“As the saying goes, the prudent bird chooses the branch to perch and the wise man his master to serve. I did attempt to dissuade my old master from a course which I felt to be disastrous, and thereby fulfilled my duty as his servant. He rejected my counsel and I knew he would fail. Your kindness and virtue is known to all the province, and I know success must be yours. That is why I wish to serve under your banner.”

“Your service will surely be of great benefit to me, sir,” said Liu Bei.

Then Li Hui began to talk of Ma Chao. “I met him once in Longxi. He is now in great straits, and I may be able to talk him over. What do you say?”

“Just the man to go on my behalf,” interjected Zhuge Liang. “But what arguments will you use?”

Li Hui leaned over and whispered something in his ear. What he said seemed to please Zhuge Liang mightily, and he was sent on the mission.

Arriving at the camp, Li Hui sent in his name, at which Ma Chao remarked, “Yes, I know him. A glib and specious talker. I know why he has come, too.”

So he placed a score of armed guards in hiding about his tent and told them to cut the visitor to pieces if the signal was given.

A moment later the guest walked in proudly. His host, remaining seated stiff and upright, asked roughly, “Why are you here?”

“Especially to talk you round.”

“This sword here in my scabbard is newly sharpened. You may go ahead with your persuasion, but if the words cannot convince me I will ask you to try my sword.”

Li Hui smiled, saying, “General, danger is not far off. I am afraid your newly-ground sword will not be tried on my head, but on your own.”

“What danger could there be for me?”

“I was told that the worst vilification could not hide the beauty of Xishi* nor could the most fulsome flattery smooth over the ugliness of Wu yan.† When the sun rises to the mid-sky it declines westward; and when the moon waxes to the full it wanes. All things obey the law. Now, sir, you are at enmity with Cao Cao for your father’s death, and in teeth-grinding hatred with Longxi for the loss of your family. You can neither rescue Liu Zhang by repulsing the army from Jingzhou, nor can you subdue Yang Song to seek an interview with Zhang Lu. Large as the world is, you can find no place for shelter nor a lord to serve—and if you experience further defeats, like that one on the Wei River, or the loss of Jicheng, will you be able to look any man in the face?”

Ma Chao bowed his head. “You are absolutely right. I am helpless.”

“If you think my words are reasonable, why do you place those fearsome guards hiding in your tent?” asked Li Hui.

Ma Chao, ashamed, ordered them to retire. Li Hui continued his speech: “Liu Bei, the uncle of the Emperor, is affable to his subordinates. I am certain he will succeed and so I have forsaken Liu Zhang to cling to him. Your honored father once joined him in denouncing Cao Cao. Why don’t you abandon darkness for light? You can avenge your father as well as make a name for yourself.”

Ma Chao, convinced of the wisdom of the course thus recommended, sent for Yang Bo, brother of the slanderous Yang Song, and slew him at once. Taking with him the head of his victim, he accompanied Li Hui to Jiameng Pass and tendered his submission. Liu Bei welcomed him warmly and treated him as a highly honored guest.

Ma Chao bowed his head and said, “Meeting you, my lord, is like dispersing the clouds to see the clear sky.”

By that time Sun Qian had also returned from his mission in Hanzhong.

Leaving the pass in the care of Meng Da and his comrade, Liu Bei returned with his army back to Mianzhu, from where he would proceed to take Chengdu. At this time two Shu officers came to oppose Liu Bei, and Zhao Yun volunteered to go out against them. Liu Bei, in the meantime, was getting a banquet ready to entertain Ma Chao. Before it even started, Zhao Yun had slew both his opponents and brought their heads to the banqueting chamber. This exploit surprised Ma Chao and doubled his respect for his new master.

“My lord, there is no need for you to fight,” said Ma Chao. “I will make Liu Zhang surrender of his own accord. Should he resist, my cousin and I will seize the city of Chengdu and offer it to you.”

Liu Bei was very pleased with this pledge and the day passed in rejoicing. But his kinsman Liu Zhang was greatly distressed at the news of his fresh misfortune, which reached him with the return of his defeated soldiers. He barred the gates and stopped all exits. Before long came news of the approach of Ma Chao with an army of relief. Only then did he venture to mount the walls. Looking down he saw Ma Chao and Ma Dai standing below the ramparts. Ma Chao called out, “I wish to speak with Liu Zhang.”

Then Liu Zhang showed himself, and Ma Chao plunged into the matter without further ado. “When I took command of Zhang Lu’s army I meant to rescue you,” he said, flourishing his whip. “But little did I expect that he would listen to the malicious tongue of Yang Song and want to slay me. I have now gone over to the side of Liu Bei, the Emperor’s uncle. I advise you, sir, to do the same and hand over your land. Thus you and your people will all escape harm. If you persist in stubborn resistance I will take the city first.”

His words came as a severe shock, and Liu Zhang, turning ashen with anguish, collapsed. When he came to he said, “I was stupid and it is too late to regret. Better open the gate and surrender so as to save all the people in the city.”

“No, no,” cried Dong He. “There are still 30,000 good soldiers in the city and ample money and supplies to sustain a year. There is no reason why we should submit now.”

But Liu Zhang was heartbroken. “My father and I have ruled here for more than twenty years and have done no particular good for the people. During the past three years of war the land was stained with the blood of my people and the fault was all mine. I could not bear it, and so I see no better way than to surrender, so that I may finally bring peace to the people.”

All those who heard him wept. Suddenly one man said, “Your words, my lord, correspond to the will of Heaven.”

Turning toward him they recognized him to be Qiao Zhou, who had the reputation of being an astrologer. Liu Zhang asked him for the reason and he replied, “I have studied the aspect of the heavens and found a multitude of stars gathering over our region, one of which shone as bright as the full moon, clearly a star for an emperor. And I recall a street urchin’s chant last year: ‘When comes the ruler from the east; then may you have new rice to eat.’ This is a presage. None can withstand the decree of the Most High.”

Huang Quan and another official were so angry at such a speech that they wanted to put the astrologer to death. But Liu Zhang checked them.

Next came news that the prefect of the metropolitan district had gone over to the invaders. This was the last straw. Liu Zhang went home weeping.

The next day he was told that Liu Bei’s envoy Jian Yong was calling at the city gate. He told the guards to open the gate and admit him. Jian Yong entered, riding in a carriage and looking about him most haughtily. Suddenly he was hailed

from the street by a man with a sword in his hand, who cried, "You insolent wretch! You have got your wish and you behave as if there is no one to compare with you. How dare you look so contemptuously at we men of Shu?"

Jian Yong quickly got out of his carriage to greet the speaker, who was a man of Mianzhu named Qin Mi.

"Worthy brother," he said. "I didn't recognize you. Please don't be angry."

Both men then went to see Liu Zhang, to whom Jian Yong said that his master, Liu Bei, being generous and broadminded, had no intention of harming him. Liu Zhang was persuaded and at last made up his mind to give up resistance. So he treated Jian Yong very honorably that day. And the next day, taking his seal and insignia of office and his archives, he went out of the city in the same carriage with Jian Yong to Liu Bei's camp. Liu Bei came out in person to receive him. Taking Liu Zhang by the hand, he wept, saying, "It is not that I wish to act so unrighteously, but I am forced by circumstances and cannot help it."

They entered the camp together, where the seal of office and the documents changed hands. Afterwards, they rode into the city side by side. The people gave Liu Bei a cordial welcome, opening their doors and burning incense. The victor went to the official assembly hall, where he took his seat and was saluted by all the former subordinates of Liu Zhang, except Huang Quan and Liu Ba, who stayed away from the ceremony. This annoyed Liu Bei's officers, who wished to go and kill the two disobedient men. Liu Bei hastened to issue an order, threatening severe punishment to anyone who tried to

harm these two. Then he went to visit the two recalcitrants. Moved by this gesture, both agreed to enter Liu Bei's service.

Zhuge Liang said, "Since we have vanquished all opposition in the land I suggest we remove Liu Zhang to Jingzhou—for there cannot be two rulers in the same place."

"But I do not wish to exile him," said Liu Bei.

"He lost his territory because of his weakness. If you cling to the effemi-nate virtue of mercy and hesitate before matters of importance, neither will you hold this land for long."

Seeing his advice was wise, Liu Bei gave a great banquet at which he asked Liu Zhang to pack up his belongings and move to Jingzhou, together with his family and servants. He gave the deposed ruler of the west country the title of General of High Prestige. Thus Liu Zhang and his followers were sent away without delay to the south.

In the meantime, Liu Bei assumed the office of Governor of Yizhou. All the civil and military officials who had surrendered were well-rewarded. Yan Yan was given a high rank in the army. Fa Zheng became Prefect of the District of Shu. Several others whose positions had been prominent in the former administration, including Huang Quan and Liu Ba, were also given high ranks and fine titles, while officials to the number of three score or more were appointed new offices.

Naturally, honors were distributed generously to Liu Bei's immediate helpers, to whose efforts he owed his victory. Zhuge Liang became Chief Military Counselor of the Forces;

his brothers Guan Yu and Zhang Fei were each created a general with a specially honorable title and a marquisdom; Zhao Yun, Huang Zhong, Wei Yan, and Ma Chao were all conferred the rank of general with meritorious titles. All the others, including those who had been guarding Jingzhou and Xiangyang, received promotions and rewards.

In addition, a special gift of five hundred catties of gold, a thousand catties of silver, a large amount of copper money, and a thousand rolls of Shu silk, was sent to Guan Yu in Jingzhou. And all the other men were given varied gifts according to their ranks. Huge numbers of oxen and horses were slaughtered to feast the army and granaries were opened to give grain to the civilians. There was great rejoicing for both the soldiers and the common folk.

Yizhou being settled, Liu Bei next desired to confiscate the famous estates in the capital city and divide them among his officers. But here Zhao Yun pointed out to him that the local people, after years of war, had lost a great deal of their property and that it would be wise policy to return the estates to the people and let them settle back in to their original occupations as soon as possible.

“In this way you will win their hearts,” he added. “It would be wrong to reward your own men at the expense of the people.”

Liu Bei listened and gave in with good grace.

To Zhuge Liang he assigned the task of revising the laws. As the punishments for offenses were rather severe, Fa Zheng said, “The founder of Han drew up only three laws, and the people were all profoundly grateful for his benevolence. I

would rather that the laws be few and liberal so as to live up to the people's expectations."

Zhuge Liang replied, "You only look at one part of this. The laws of the Qin Dynasty were cruel and were therefore resented by the people. So it was fitting that the founder of Han should temper them with kindness. But the situation here is different. Liu Zhang, being weak and inefficient, could neither rule with benevolence nor with severity. Hence the proper relationship between the ruler and his subordinates was gradually obscured. Those who had received his favor by being awarded office became cruel once they acquired the highest ranks; those who had benefited from his kindness turned ungrateful once the kindness was no longer bestowed. That eventually led to all the problems in his administration. Now I mean to inculcate fear through the law, so that when law is performed people will know gratitude; and to constrain behavior by ranks, so that when one is promoted in rank he will value its honor. In the mutual cooperation between gratitude and honor, and in a proper distinction between superiors and inferiors, lie the efficiency of a government."

Fa Zheng was completely convinced. In due time, law and order was observed by both the military and civilians. All the forty-one districts, guarded by their garrisons, were finally peaceful and contented.

As prefect of the metropolitan district, Fa Zheng took advantage of his position to reward whomever had formerly given him as trivial a favor as a meal and to revenge on whomever had once offended him by so much as flashing an angry glance at him. Someone told this to Zhuge Liang, urging him to admonish Fa Zheng.

But Zhuge Liang replied, “When our lord was in Jingzhou, fearful of Cao Cao in the north and Sun Quan in the east, Fa Zheng gave him full support. In these prosperous days one can hardly begin to discipline him. Could we reasonably forbid him following his own way?”

So no investigation was made, but Fa Zheng, hearing of these words, began to restrain himself in his vengeance.

One day, when Liu Bei was chatting with Zhuge Liang at leisure, it was announced that Guan Yu had sent his adopted son, Guan Ping, to thank him for the handsome gifts. He called the young man in. Guan Ping paid his respects and handed over his father’s letter. Then he said that his father, hearing of Ma Chao’s excellent skill in martial arts, was anxious to come into Chengdu to compete with him.

Liu Bei was startled, “If he were to come and fight with Ma Chao I fear they would become enemies.”

“There is nothing to fear,” said Zhuge Liang. “I will write to him.”

Liu Bei, knowing his brother’s impulsive temperament, asked Zhuge Liang to compose the letter at once and send it back by Guan Ping.

When Guan Ping returned to Jingzhou, his father’s first question was about the contest with Ma Chao. The young man produced the letter:

> “I hear you are anxious to compete with Ma Chao to determine which of you is the more valiant. Now

Ma Chao may be unusually brave, but he is only of the class of Ying Bu and Peng Yue.* He might be a worthy rival of your younger brother Yi-de, but he is far from the standard set by you, General of the Beautiful Beard. Besides, you have been entrusted with the defense of Jingzhou, which is a very important task. If you come to Chengdu, and Jingzhou should be lost, would you not be guilty of a terrible neglect of your duty? Pray consider this."

Guan Yu stroked his long beard and smiled as he read the letter. He knows me perfectly well, he said to himself. He showed the letter to his subordinates and friends. There was no more talk of going westward.

The success of Liu Bei in the west had been duly reported to Sun Quan, who again thought of obtaining the much-coveted Jingzhou. So he called in Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong to ask them for advice.

Zhang Zhao said that he had a scheme which would make Liu Bei return the place with outstretched hands without a fight.

In Shu there shines new sun and moon,

Wu dreams Jingzhou will be its own soon.

What this scheme was will be disclosed in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* A famous beauty in the period of Spring and Autumn.

† A virtuous but rather ugly woman in ancient China.

* Both were valiant officers of the founder of the Han Dynasty.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

Armed with His Sword, Guan Yu Goes to a Feast Alone

Empress Fu Devotes Her Life to the State

As Sun Quan wanted Jingzhou back, his advisor Zhang Zhao proposed the following scheme: “The one man whom Liu Bei relies on most is Zhuge Liang. Now his brother is in your service. All you have to do is to seize his family and then send him west to see his brother and make him persuade Liu Bei to return Jingzhou. Tell him to say to Zhuge Liang that if he refuses, the family will perish—Zhuge Liang will not ignore the pleading of a brother.”

“But Zhuge Jin is a loyal and true man. I cannot lay hands upon his family,” said Sun Quan.

“Explain the ruse to him—that will set his mind at rest,” said Zhang Zhao.

Sun Quan consented and issued a command to pretend to confine Zhuge Jin’s family under house arrest. Then he wrote a letter for Zhuge Jin to take with him on his mission. Before long he reached the border of Chengdu and sent someone to inform Liu Bei of his arrival, who at once sought the advice of his able counselor.

“Why do you think your brother has come?”

“To ask for the return of Jingzhou.”

“How am I to answer him?”

Zhuge Liang told him what he should say.

Having decided on what to say, Zhuge Liang went out of the city to welcome his brother, but instead of taking him to his own residence, he took him to the guesthouse. When the greetings were over, the visitor suddenly lifted up his voice and wept.

“If you have any trouble, brother, tell me—why do you weep like this?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“Alas! my family are imprisoned and will die,” cried his elder brother.

“Is it because Jingzhou has not been returned? If your family have been seized on my account, how can my heart be at rest? But don’t be anxious, brother. I’ll certainly find some way to return the place to Wu.”

This reply pleased Zhuge Jin, and the two brothers went to see Liu Bei. The letter was presented, but when Liu Bei read it he said angrily, “Sun Quan has given his sister to me as a wife but he has secretly stolen her away during my absence from Jingzhou. That is utterly intolerable! I am just thinking of leading my army to seek vengeance upon him and yet he is brazen enough to ask me to give him Jingzhou.”

At this point Zhuge Liang prostrated himself, weeping at his lord's feet and said, "The Lord of Wu has seized my brother's family, and he will put them all to death if the land is not given back. Can I remain alive if such a fate should befall my brother? I pray you, my lord, return the district for my sake and prevent any breach between my brother and me."

But Liu Bei refused. He seemed obdurate, but Zhuge Liang persisted in his entreaty. Finally Liu Bei reluctantly conceded.

"All right. For your sake I will return half of the Jingzhou region to him," he said. "I will give up Changsha, Lingling, and Guiyang."

"Since you have consented, please write a letter to Yun-chang and order him to yield these three districts," said Zhuge Liang.

Liu Bei said to his visitor, "When you see my brother you must use most gracious words to plead with him, for he is fiery-tempered, and I myself am afraid of him. So be very careful."

Zhuge Jin, having got the letter, took his leave and went straight away to Jingzhou to see Guan Yu. He was welcomed into the reception hall. When both were seated in their respective places as host and guest, the emissary produced Liu Bei's letter, saying, "Your lord has promised to return three districts to Wu, and I hope, General, you will hand them over at once so that I can go back to see my master."

Guan Yu's countenance changed, and he said, "My brother and I swore an oath in the Peach Garden to support the House

of Han. Jingzhou is a portion of the Han domain, and how can any part be given to another? As is known to all, 'When a general is out in the field, he receives no orders, not even those of his prince.' Although you have brought a letter from my brother, yet I will not yield the territory."

"But my lord has laid hands upon my family, and they will be slain if the land is not returned. Have pity on me, General!"

"This is only a ruse on his part, but it does not deceive me."

"Why are you so pitiless?"

Guan Yu drew his sword, saying, "Say no more. This sword is pitiless."

"Do not be so angry, father," said Guan Ping. "Remember he is brother of our Chief Counselor."

"Were it not for my respect for our Chief Counselor," said Guan Yu, "you would never get back to Wu."

Zhuge Jin, overwhelmed with shame, took his leave and hastily returned to Shu to see his brother again. But Zhuge Liang had gone away on a journey. So he could only go and see Liu Bei, to whom he reported that Guan Yu wanted to slay him.

"My brother is impetuous," said Liu Bei. "It is difficult to argue with him. But go back home for the present. When I have finished my conquest of East Chuan and Hanzhong, I will transfer Guan Yu to another post, and then I will be able to return Jingzhou."

As there was no other alternative, Zhuge Jin had to accept this and return home with the unsatisfactory news to his master, who was greatly annoyed, saying, "Your running to and fro was probably nothing more than one of your brother's tricks."

The poor messenger denied this and told Sun Quan how his brother had pleaded with tears and obtained the promise to return the three districts. "It was the obstinacy of Guan Yu that spoiled all," he insisted.

"Since Liu Bei said he would return the three districts, we may send officials there to take over their administration," said Sun Quan. "Do you think that might be done?"

"That seems most proper."

The family of Zhuge Jin were freed from confinement and officers were sent to take charge of the three districts that had been named. But they quickly returned, saying that Guan Yu would have none of them, but had driven them away at once with threats to kill them if they did not hasten. Sun Quan then summoned Lu Su and laid the blame on him.

"You are Liu Bei's guarantor in this matter—how can you sit quietly looking on while he fails to fulfill his contract?" said Sun Quan.

"I have thought out a plan and was just going to impart it to you, my lord," said Lu Su.

"And what is your plan?"

Lu Su said, “I will station an army at Lukou and then invite Guan Yu to a banquet there. I will first try to reason with him. If he remains obstinate, I will have some assassins ready to slay him. Should he refuse to come to the banquet, then we will simply settle the issue in battle.”

“This sounds good to me,” said Sun Quan, “but it must be done quickly.”

“This will not do,” interrupted Kan Ze. “Guan Yu is a veritable tiger and not at all like common men. If the plan fails it will only result in more harm.”

“Then when will I expect to gain Jingzhou?” retorted Sun Quan angrily.

He ordered Lu Su to carry out his plan, and so Lu Su went to Lukou where, after consulting his close subordinates, he decided to give the banquet at a pavilion overlooking the river near his camp. Then he wrote a letter and found a persuasive person to deliver it. The messenger sailed across the river to the other shore, where he was received by Guan Ping, who conducted him to his father.

“Since Lu Su invites me, I will go tomorrow,” said Guan Yu to the man. “You may leave.”

After the messenger had gone, Guan Ping said to his father, “Why did you promise to go? I think Lu Su intends evil.”

“Do you think I don’t know? This is because of my refusal to yield those three districts. They are going to try coercion at this banquet. If I refuse to go they will think I fear them. I will

go tomorrow in a small ship with just a dozen of my personal attendants. With my sword at my side, I don't think Lu Su dares to come near me."

"But, father, why risk your precious self to enter the very den of a tiger? I am afraid you are not giving due attention to my uncle's deepest trust in you for the defense of this city."

"I have been in the midst of imminent dangers all alone and have been careless of them; do you think I will worry about a few such rats as those?"

Nor was the son alone in trying to dissuade him from going. Ma Liang also warned his chief.

"Although Lu Su has a fine reputation, yet he is being pushed too hard and his banquet certainly means evil. You must be careful, General."

Guan Yu replied, "I have given my word, and can I withdraw from it? In the days of the Warring States, Lin Xiangru of the kingdom of Zhao, who had not even the strength to bind a chicken, was bold enough to defy the ruler of Qin and his whole court in the assembly at Mianzhi,* let alone me, who has developed the skill to face any number of foes. I can't break my promise."

"If you must go," said Ma Liang, "at least go prepared."

"Choose ten fast ships and five hundred good marines. Let these be in readiness to help me if necessary," said Guan Yu to his son. "And when you see a red flag hoisted up, come over to my aid."

Guan Ping went to get the ships ready.

The messenger returned to his master and told him that Guan Yu had boldly accepted the invitation. Lu Su took counsel with Lu Meng.

"What do you think of this?" asked Lu Su.

"If he comes with a force, Gan Ning and I will each take a troop and lie in wait for him by the riverside. And at a signal explosion we will begin our attack. If he has no force with him, then we need only place fifty guards behind the pavilion and slay him during the banquet."

The next day a lookout was kept on the bank, and early in the day a single ship came along. It was manned by very few people, and a red flag fluttered in the wind showing one big character "Guan," the surname of the great warrior. Presently they could see him, a magnificent figure in a green robe and black turban. Beside him stood Zhou Cang, his sword-bearer, and near him were eight or nine powerful-looking men, each with a sword at his side.

Guan Yu landed and was received by an apprehensive Lu Su, who conducted him to the hall, and after the greetings, led him to the banquet chamber. When he raised his cup to urge his guest to drink Lu Su dared not even meet his eyes, but Guan Yu was perfectly composed.

In the middle of the feast, Lu Su said, "I have a word to say to you, General, if I may have your attention. As you know, your illustrious brother pledged to my master through my mediation that Jingzhou would be returned after Yizhou had

been taken. Well, now the west is in his possession, but Jingzhou is still not returned. Isn't this a breach of good faith?"

"This is government business," said Guan Yu. "Such matters should not be discussed at a banquet."

"My master only has the meager possession of the east, and he allowed the temporary loan of Jingzhou purely out of the consideration that your brother, being newly defeated, had no place of his own. But now he has Yizhou, and Jingzhou should be handed over to us. Your brother has agreed to yield three districts first, but you, sir, refuse to do so. This seems hard to explain on reasonable grounds."

Guan Yu replied, "My brother braved arrows and stones in the battle at Wuling and exerted himself to drive back the enemy. Should he be denied a single foot of land for all his efforts? How can you come to force this place from me?"

"No, this is not true," said Lu Su. "At that time you and your brother suffered defeat at the Long Slope. You were in greatest straits, like fugitives who did not know where to turn. Then my master, moved with pity, did not grudge the land. So he gave your brother a foothold from where he might be able to accomplish other ends. But your brother has broken both faith and friendship. He has acquired Yizhou, yet he still occupies Jingzhou. Such greed and such treachery will put him to shame before the whole world, as you well know."

"All that does not concern me. I cannot interfere in my brother's affairs."

“I know that by the oath in the Peach Garden you three are to live or die together. Your brother’s affairs are yours, too. How can you say it does not concern you?”

Before Guan Yu could make a reply, his sword-bearer Zhou Cang roared, “He who is virtuous should own the land. Why must the territory belong to you people of Wu only?”

Guan Yu changed color at this. Rising from his seat, he took his sword from his sword-bearer and said, feigning reproach: “How dare you interrupt during a discussion of state matters? Get out quickly!” And he gave him a meaningful look.

Zhou Cang took the hint. He left immediately for the riverbank and waved the red flag. At this signal Guan Ping’s ten ships darted across like arrows and were ready for action.

The mighty sword in his right hand, Guan Yu laid hold of his host with his left, and simulating intoxication, said: “You have kindly invited me today, sir, but do not say anything about Jingzhou, for I am so drunk that I may forget our old friendship. Some other day I hope to invite you to Jingzhou, and then we will talk about that matter.”

Poor Lu Su’s soul almost left his body with fright as he was led down to the riverbank in the grip of his guest. The two officers he had placed in ambush dared not stir lest Lu Su should be injured. It was only when they got to the bank that Guan Yu released his host, got on board, and then said farewell. Lu Su stood dazed, staring at the receding ship, while a fair breeze bore it quickly out of sight.

This episode has been commemorated in verse:

He showed his contempt for the men of the east

By going alone to their evil feast.

So heroic was he at the banquet,
Even Xiangru of old was not his match.

So Guan Yu went his homeward way, leaving Lu Su and his friends worrying over their failure.

"What can be done now?" asked Lu Su.

"The only way is to tell our master and let him send an army," replied Lu Meng.

Lu Su sent a messenger to Sun Quan, who, in his wrath, wanted to send every available soldier at once to seize Jingzhou. But at this time there came news that Cao Cao was raising a huge army with the intention of attacking the south again. So hasty orders were sent to Lu Su to make no move, but to march the army northward to repel Cao Cao first.

However, when Cao Cao planned to march south, one of his officers, Fu Gan, petitioned against the operation.

"I, Fu Gan, understand that inspiring fear is the chief consideration in war, as inculcating virtue is in government. These two combined in one man makes him fit to be a prince. Formerly, in the days of disturbance, you, sir, attacked the rebels and restored tranquillity across the land, the only districts not under your control being Wu and Shu. The former of these is protected by the wide Great River while the latter is secured by its high mountains, both difficult to

conquer by force of arms. My humble opinion is that it is more fitting to strengthen the authority of civil government, to lay aside armor and weapons, and to rest your officers and men until the times are more favorable. But if you send a mighty army now to the banks of the Great River, and if the rebels should take refuge behind their natural defenses, then your men will be unable to prove their prowess, nor can they apply their wonderful strategies. In such a case your high prestige would be undermined. I pray, sir, you will consider this very carefully."

After reading this, Cao Cao ceased to think of an expedition against the south. Instead, he set about establishing schools and inviting men of learning to his side.

About the same time four of his officials conceived the idea of gaining for Cao Cao the title of "Prince of Wei." But their proposal was opposed by Xun You who said, "The prime minister is already created a duke, and has received the additional honor of the Nine Gifts, so that his rank has reached the very pinnacle. If he advances to the rank of prince it will be against reason."

But Cao Cao was annoyed at this opposition and said, "Does he wish to emulate his uncle Xun Yu?"

When Xun You heard of this he was grieved and fell ill. About ten days later he died, at the age of fifty-eight. Cao Cao had his remains interred honorably, and he abandoned the idea for a princely rank.

One day he entered the palace wearing his sword and made his way to the chamber where the Emperor and Empress were

seated. Seeing Cao Cao the Empress rose in fright and the Emperor trembled in terror.

"Sun Quan and Liu Bei have each seized a portion of the empire and no longer respect the court—what is to be done?"

To this abrupt speech the Emperor replied, "Whatever you say, sir."

Cao Cao answered angrily, "If such a remark were known outside they would say I treat my lord without respect."

"If you were to help me I would be most happy," said the Emperor. "If not, then I trust to your kindness to let me alone."

At this Cao Cao glared at the Emperor and left, full of resentment.

One of the courtiers said, "They say the Duke of Wei (Cao Cao) desires to assume the title of prince and soon he will aspire to the throne."

Both the Emperor and his consort wept. Presently the Empress said, "My father, Fu Wan, has long nourished a desire to slay this man. Let me write a secret letter to my father and ask him to plan this."

"Remember what happened to Dong Cheng. The secret was divulged and great misery ensued. I fear this might also leak out and both of us will be undone."

The Empress said, “We pass our days in constant fear, like sitting on a rug full of needles. If life continues to be so miserable I would rather be dead. But I know one loyal man among the attendants to whom I may entrust the letter. He is Mu Shun and he will deliver it.”

Therefore she summoned Mu Shun, and having sent away all others, they told their distress to the faithful servant.

“That fellow Cao Cao desires the rank of prince and soon he will aspire to the throne itself. I, the Emperor, wish to order the father of my consort to make away with the man, but the difficulty is that all the courtiers are his men and there is none whom I can trust, save yourself. I desire you to convey this secret letter to Fu Wan. I know your loyalty and am sure you will not fail me.”

“I am the recipient of great kindness from Your Majesty,” wept Mu Shun, “for which not even death would prove my gratitude. Let me be allowed to undertake this.”

The letter was given to Mu Shun, who, hiding it in his hair, made his way secretly out of the palace and handed it to the father of the Empress. Fu Wan recognized the handwriting of his daughter and read it. Turning to the messenger he said, “You know Cao Cao’s henchmen are many, and it is no easy matter to deal with him unless we have the aid of Sun Quan and Liu Bei. If these two raise a joint force against him, Cao Cao will certainly lead his army out to fight them, and then we can rally together every loyal and faithful official in the court to oppose him. Thus there will be a simultaneous attack against him both from within and without. Only then can we hope for success.”

“Pray write a letter in reply to ask the Emperor for a secret edict, so that we may send it secretly to Wu and Shu, ordering them to join in an attack against Cao Cao.”

So Fu Wan composed a reply, which he gave to Mu Shun to take into the palace. This time the letter was also concealed in his hair.

But spies had already reported Mu Shun’s departure from the palace to Cao Cao, who waited at the palace gate for him to return.

“Where have you been?” asked Cao Cao, when the courtier appeared.

“The Empress is indisposed and has ordered me to summon a physician.”

“Where is the physician you have summoned?”

“He has not yet come.”

Cao Cao told his men to search Mu Shun, but they could find nothing on him. So he was allowed to go. But just then a gust of wind blew off his hat, and it struck Cao Cao that his headwear had not been examined. So Mu Shun was called back. Nothing was found in the hat, but when it was given back, Mu Shun put it on back to the front with both hands. There was something suspicious about the movement and Cao Cao told the searchers to examine his hair.

There the letter was found. Cao Cao read it, finding out that Sun Quan and Liu Bei were to be induced to help in a scheme

against himself. Mu Shun was taken away into a secret place and interrogated, but he would confess nothing.

That night, 3,000 armored soldiers surrounded the dwelling of Fu Wan, who was arrested with all his family. After a careful search of the house they found the first letter in the handwriting of the Empress. Fu Wan and his family were then consigned to a jail.

At dawn, three hundred palace guards, under Chi Lu, bearing ensigns of authority, entered the palace with orders to take away the seal of the Empress. On the way they met the Emperor, who asked them what their business was.

“I have orders from the Duke of Wei to seize the Empress’s seal,” said Chi Lu.

The Emperor, aware that the secret had been exposed, felt as if his heart and gall were pounded to pieces. As soon as the Empress knew of this she recognized her danger and hid herself in the hollow walls of her private chamber, behind one of the ceremonial halls. She had not been long in hiding when the minister Hua Xin appeared with five hundred men and asked where she was. The palace maids all denied any knowledge of her whereabouts. The red doors of the chamber were forced open and Hua Xin looked in, but he saw no lady there. It occurred to him where she might be hidden, and he ordered his armored men to break open the wall. With his own hands he laid hold of the Empress’ hair and dragged her forth.

“Spare my life!” she pleaded.

“Say that to the Duke of Wei,” he cried surly.

With tumbling hair and bare feet the lady was pushed out by a couple of soldiers.

Here a little note may be added about this Hua Xin. This man had some reputation for learning. He and two others, named Bing Yuan and Guan Ning, made a little coterie which was known as “The Dragon.” Hua Xin was the “head,” his two friends the “belly” and the “tail” respectively. One day, while hoeing in their garden, he and Guan Ning turned up an ingot of gold. Guan Ning went on with his work undisturbed but Hua Xin picked it up to examine it and then cast it away.

Another day the two were reading together when there arose shouting outside the window of the study. An important personage was passing by. Guan Ning took no notice, but kept his eyes on his book; Hua Xin rose and went to the window. For these two incidents Guan Ning despised his companion. He cut in two the mattress which served as their seats to sit separately from him and never regarded him as a friend. Sometime after, Guan Ning moved to the northeast, where he led the life of a hermit. He often wore a white cap and lived in the upper part of a house, never even touching the ground with his feet. All his life he refused to enter Cao Cao’s service. But the mercenary Hua Xin led a totally different life. For a time he was with Sun Quan; then he went over to Cao Cao and served him. And here at last he was found actually laying hands upon the Empress. His base conduct is the subject of a poem:

‘Twas a despicable thing that Hua Xin did,

When he broke down the wall where the Empress hid
And dragged her forth by the hair.

He lent his aid to a foul, foul crime
And denunciations throughout all time,
Have been, and will be, his share.

A poet also wrote concerning Guan Ning:

East of the Liao, so stories tell

Is Guan Ning's Tower, where long he dwelt.
The tower is empty when he is no more
But his fine name lives on.

Ignoble wealth was Hua Xin's quest,
The hermit's simple life was best.

As Hua Xin hurried the Empress out of the hall the Emperor saw her. He went over and clasped her to his bosom, weeping. Hua Xin forced her onward, saying he had orders from the Duke of Wei.

"My doom is sealed," wept the Empress.

"And I don't know how long I may live," replied the Emperor.

The soldiers hustled the Empress forward, leaving His Majesty beating his breast in despair.

“Can it be that such things happen in the world?” cried the Emperor to Chi Lu, who stood by.

And he collapsed to the ground. Chi Lu told the courtiers to help him into the palace.

Meanwhile, the poor Empress was taken before Cao Cao.

“I have treated you people well,” he said angrily, “and you repaid me by plotting to murder me. If I do not kill you, you will surely kill me.”

He ordered the executioners to beat her to death with rods. After this, he went into the palace, seized her two sons and had them poisoned. In the evening of the same day the whole households of Fu Wan and Mu Shun were put to death publicly. Terror reigned everywhere. This happened in the late fall of the nineteenth year of Jian An (A.D. 211).

As Cao stands first in cruelty,

So stands Fu Wan in loyalty.

A married pair of low estate,
Is better than the royal couple in fate.

The Emperor grieved bitterly over the loss of his consort, and in his despair refused all food for days running. Cao Cao went in to see him.

“Do not be sad,” he said. “I am no rebel. My daughter is already waiting on you in the palace. She is virtuous and dutiful, fit to be your consort.”

The Emperor dared not refuse, and therefore at the new year, in the time of the festivities, her name was inscribed on the dynastic rolls as Empress. And none of the officials dared to protest.

Cao Cao thus became even more powerful. To eliminate his rivals in the land, he again thought of subduing Liu Bei and Sun Quan. Jia Xu proposed that Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren, who had been guarding the frontiers, should be called back to give their advice. They were sent for, and Cao Ren was the first to arrive. As a relative he felt he had the right to see the duke without delay and went direct to his residence.

But it so happened that Cao Cao had been sleeping after too much wine, and his faithful henchman, Xu Chu, would not allow Cao Ren to enter.

"I am of the family," said Cao Ren, angry at the hindrance. "How dare you stop me?"

"General, you may be a relative, but you are an officer from the frontier. I am no relation, but I am a guard in the residence. Our lord is overcome with wine and asleep, and I dare not allow you to enter."

The refusal came to Cao Cao's knowledge, and he commended Xu Chu for his loyalty.

Soon after, Xiahou Dun also came and the discussion about the expeditions to Wu and Shu began. However, Xiahou Dun was not in favor of an operation against these two rivals. Instead, he proposed subduing Zhang Lu of Hanzhong first. "Then with the triumphant army we can seize Shu without

difficulty," he said. The advice coincided with Cao Cao's own idea, and so he prepared an expedition for the west.

> Barely had he ridden roughshod o'er a feeble king;
>
> At once he hastened to sweep his west frontiers clean.

What happened will be told in the next chapter.

Footnote

* An old city in modern Henan where the two rulers of the Kingdoms of Zhao and Qin met in 279 B.C. Lin Xiangru, an official of Zhao was also present and his bravery prevented his lord from being humiliated by his powerful rival.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

Cao Cao Conquers Hanzhong

Zhang Liao Spreads Terror at Xiaoyao Ford

The expedition against Hanzhong was divided into three divisions, with Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He as leaders of the van, Cao Cao in command of the center, and Cao Ren and Xiahou Dun bringing up the rear, in charge of the supplies. Spies soon carried the news into Hanzhong, and Zhang Lu called in his brother Wei to discuss how to meet the invaders.

Zhang Wei said, "The most dangerous point to hold is Yangping Pass, and I will go and set up a dozen stockades there in the hills and woods to hold the enemy. You, my brother, should assist me with plenty of supplies from here."

Accordingly two officers, Yang Ang and Yang Ren, were sent with Zhang Wei to Yangping Pass, where they built the stockades. Soon the vanguard of the enemy arrived and camped at a point fifteen li away. The soldiers were fatigued after the long march, and all lay down to rest without placing proper guards. Suddenly a fire broke out at the back of the camp, which was at once attacked by the two Yangs from two different points. Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He mounted quickly and tried to beat off the raiders, but the enemy poured in all around, and Cao Cao's men suffered a great loss. They

returned to the main body to tell their master of their defeat and were severely reproached for their want of care.

“Don’t you know the warning, ‘Guard against a raid on the camp after a long and weary march?’ How could old soldiers like you have forgotten that?”

He was so angry that he even desired to put them to death to observe military law, but their fellow officers interceded and he spared them. Soon Cao Cao himself marched in the van. Then he saw the dangerous nature of the place, with its precipitous mountains and thick growth of trees and brambles. As he knew nothing of the roads he was afraid lest there was an ambush, so he returned to his camp.

Calling up his two henchmen, Xu Chu and Xu Huang, he said, “Had I known the place was so perilous I would never have come.”

Xu Chu replied, “The army is here now, my lord, and you cannot recoil before the hardships.”

The next day Cao Cao, with only these two officers, rode out to reconnoiter the enemy camp. As they rode over the crest of a hill the enemy position came into view in the distance. Cao Cao pointed at it with his whip and said, “It will be very difficult to reduce a place as strong as this.”

Just then there arose a shout in their rear and a shower of arrows fell about them. The two Yangs were attacking and the danger was imminent.

“You look after our lord,” cried Xu Chu to his comrade. “I’ll hold the enemy.”

He galloped out and the two Yangs, who were unable to counter him, took flight, while their men scattered. In the meantime, Xu Huang led his master down the slope. Soon they met a troop of soldiers led by Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He, who had heard the sound of fighting and had come to the rescue, and Cao Cao got back safely to camp. The four officers were rewarded.

For fifty days the two armies held each other at bay without coming to battle. At the end of this time, Cao Cao gave orders to withdraw.

“We have not tried the strength of the enemy yet,” said Jia Xu. “Why withdraw, my lord?”

“I see that they are always on the alert,” replied Cao Cao. “I am only withdrawing to put them off their guard. Then I will send some light cavalry to attack their rear. In this way I can defeat them.”

“Your resourcefulness is without depth!” cried Jia Xu in admiration.

Two bodies of soldiers under Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He were then sent to get around to the back of the pass by unfrequented roads, while Cao Cao broke up his camp and led his main body to feign a retreat.

When Yang Ang heard of the retreat he thought it would be a good chance to attack, but Yang Ren, knowing how cunning

their opponent was, opposed it. Yang Ang was nevertheless willful and said, “If you don’t go, I will.”

In spite of the protestations of his colleague, Yang Ang went in pursuit of the enemy, taking with him almost all the men of the five camps, leaving only a few to hold the stockades. However, the force soon ran into great difficulties, for there was a heavy fog that day and the soldiers could hardly see anything in front. As advance was impossible they had to encamp temporarily on the road.

Now, Xiahou Yuan and his men were trying to find some bypath behind the hills when they heard the voices of men and the neighing of horses. In the dense fog they could see nothing, but fearing an ambush they hastened to turn back. They lost their way and presently stumbled on an enemy camp. The remaining soldiers thought their comrades had returned, so they threw open the gates to let them in. Seeing that the camp was empty, Xiahou Yuan’s men raised a blaze, which frightened those in the camps and they fled. As soon as the fog cleared, Yang Ren came to the rescue, but as more of Cao Cao’s men came up, the enemy force was too strong for him and he quickly fled toward Nanzheng.* When Yang Ang returned, he found his camp in the possession of Cao Cao’s men.

Soon Cao Cao’s main army came up, and Yang Ang was between two forces. There was no way out for him and in desperation he made a dash to break through. However, he fell in with Zhang He and was slain. Those who escaped carried the news of the disaster to Zhang Wei, who abandoned the pass and fled.

So the invaders took possession of the pass, and its former defenders, Zhang Wei and Yang Ren, had to go back and report failure to their master. Zhang Wei laid the blame on his companion, saying the pass could not be held after its supporting positions were lost. Zhang Lu, enraged, threatened to behead Yang Ren for his failure.

Yang Ren argued, "I tried to prevent Yang Ang from taking a rash action, but he would not listen. Let me make another attack and if I fail I will abide by the consequences without regret."

Zhang Lu accepted his formal pledge and Yang Ren left with 20,000 men to camp some distance from Nanzheng.

Before Cao Cao made any further advance he sent Xiahou Yuan with 5,000 men to reconnoiter the road to Nanzheng, and they encountered the force led by Yang Ren. Both sides drew up their battle formations. From Yang Ren's side went forth a minor officer to engage Xiahou Yuan, who disposed of him in the third bout. Then Yang Ren himself set his spear and rode to the front. They two fought for nearly two score bouts but neither could claim victory. Then Xiahou Yuan pretended defeat and fled. The other rushed in pursuit. The fugitive suddenly turned to strike and Yang Ren, caught unprepared, was killed by his opponent. His men ran away.

As soon as Cao Cao knew of this victory he pressed on to Nanzheng and camped outside the city.

In a panic, Zhang Lu called a general council to discuss measures to overcome the enemy.

“I can recommend a man able to stand against the best fighter of the enemy,” said Yan Pu.

“Who is he?” asked Zhang Lu.

“Pang De,” replied Yan Pu. “He came here with Ma Chao, but could not go with him into Yizhou, as he was sick at that time. He is under your wings now. Why not send him to fight the enemy?”

Zhang Lu, greatly pleased, at once summoned Pang De, loaded him with gifts and appointed him commander of a force of 10,000 men. Pang De then marched off with his men and camped ten li from the city, near the besieging force.

Having made his camp, Pang De rode out to challenge. Now Cao Cao, remembering Pang De’s boldness at the battle of the bridge over the Wei River, was desirous of winning this warrior for himself, so he told his men to try to weary him by prolonging the fights, and so make him captive.

Therefore out rode Zhang He first to answer the challenge. He fought a few bouts and returned. Then Xiahou Yuan repeated the same trick. So did Xu Huang. Lastly went Xu Chu, who kept up the fight to fifty bouts before he, too, returned to his own side. Still Pang De showed no signs of fatigue or fear, and all those who had fought with him praised his prowess and skill.

“If only I could win him over to my side!” said Cao Cao longingly.

The advisor Jia Xu said, “I know Zhang Lu has a subordinate called Yang Song. He is avaricious and open to bribery. You can secretly send him presents and get him to slander Pang De before his master so as to weaken his position. Then your chance will come.”

“But how can one get at this man? He is in Nanzheng.”

“In the next battle pretend defeat and flee, leaving the camp for Pang De to occupy. Then raid the camp at night and drive him out, and he will be forced to retreat into the city. Choose a man with a persuasive tongue. Disguised as one of Pang De’s soldiers, he is to mingle among them and so gain entrance into the city.”

A subtle agent was found, and goodly gifts were given to him in advance. He was entrusted with a golden breastplate as a bribe for the greedy official. He wore it next to his flesh and over it put on the coat of an ordinary soldier of Hanzhong. Then he made his way quietly to a point on the road to Nanzheng. There he waited for Pang De’s men, who would retreat into the city later in the night.

The next day, after two bodies of soldiers left to wait in ambush, Xu Huang was sent out to challenge, but with orders to feign defeat. The scheme went well, and as Pang De came on to strike, Cao Cao’s men retreated before him till he found himself at their very camp. In he entered, and was exceedingly pleased to find grain and forage in great quantities.

Having sent off a messenger to his chief to report the victory, he spread a feast in the camp to celebrate the happy occasion;

and when night came, they slept. But about the second watch fire broke out on three sides, and the camp was raided by three forces. It was the night attack arranged by Cao Cao, and Pang De, who was entirely unprepared, could not make any defense. Hurriedly he mounted, cut his way through, and made for the city. With the attackers in close pursuit he reached the gate, opened it, and rushed in.

And the spy also stole in amid the confusion. He made his way quickly to Yang Song's residence to see him. He told the corrupt official that the Duke of Wei, who knew him by reputation and held him in high esteem, had sent him a golden breastplate and a confidential letter. The rapturous Yang Song accepted the bribe, read the letter, and said, "Tell the duke to have no anxiety for I will find a means of proving my gratitude. You may return."

He went to see Zhang Lu that very night and fabricated a story that Pang De had deliberately lost the battle because he had been bribed by Cao Cao. Zhang Lu summoned his general in a fury, abused him severely and even desired to put him to death. Yan Pu, however, interceded very strongly for his friend, and finally Zhang Lu agreed to give Pang De another chance. "If you lose again this time there will be no mercy for you," added Zhang Lu.

Pang De retired, full of resentment. The next day Cao Cao attacked the city, and Pang De went out to repel him. Cao Cao sent out his favorite, Xu Chu, to challenge but ordered him to feign defeat. When Pang De pursued, Cao Cao rode to a slope, where he halted and called to his pursuer to surrender.

Pang De thought to himself that to capture Cao Cao would be worth the seizure of a thousand officers, so he boldly flew up the hill. But there arose a great shouting as if heaven and earth were clashing together and he and his horse went headlong into a pit. Out came men with ropes and hooks, and Pang De was caught.

When he was taken before Cao Cao he was received with the greatest kindness. Cao Cao himself dismounted, loosened the captive's bonds and asked him if he would surrender. Pang De, remembering the ill-treatment he had just received at the hands of Zhang Lu, gave in. Cao Cao was overjoyed. He himself helped Pang De onto a horse and intentionally accompanied him to his camp, so that those on the city wall would see them together. And, indeed, men on the city wall saw this and told Zhang Lu that Pang De was riding side-by-side with Cao Cao. This further convinced Zhang Lu that Yang Song had spoken truly.

On the following day, scaling ladders were set against the city wall on three sides and catapults threw in great stones. The danger being imminent, Zhang Wei advised his brother to destroy all supplies in the city and escape to the mountains in the south, where they might be able to get to Bazhong. But Yang Song said the best course was to throw open the gates and surrender. Zhang Lu could not decide which to do. His brother insisted that burning everything and fleeing was the only course.

Zhang Lu said, "I have always desired to return my to allegiance to the state but so far I have been unable to attain this end. Now escape seems to be the only course open to me.

However, the grain and money belong to the state and must be kept safe."

So the granaries and the government buildings were all carefully barred and sealed. The same night, Zhang Lu and his family went out through the south gate. Cao Cao told his men not to pursue, so they made their way through with ease. When he entered the city and saw that Zhang Lu had taken great care of the government property, Cao Cao rather pitied the man. He then sent a messenger into Bazhong to ask him to surrender. Zhang Lu was disposed to do so, but his brother would not hear of it. Yang Song wrote a secret letter to Cao Cao urging him to attack and promising to assist him from the inside.

Cao Cao presently attacked, and Zhang Wei rode out to meet him. But his opponent was the mighty Xu Chu, who made short work of him. The beaten soldiers went back into the city, which Zhang Lu then decided to defend. As this would not give Yang Song the chance to carry out his treacherous scheme, he persuaded his master to go out and fight, leaving him to hold the city. Zhang Lu took this advice, despite Yan Pu's opposition, and went out. But before he could fight with the enemy, his rear ranks began to desert, and Zhang Lu was forced to retreat, with Cao Cao's men following in pursuit. However, when he called at the gate, Zhang Lu was denied entrance by the traitor Yang Song.

Cao Cao came riding up and shouted, "Why not surrender at once?" There being no way out, Zhang Lu dismounted and bowed in submission. Cao Cao, remembering how he had taken care of the public property, treated him with great kindness and conferred on him the title of General–Guardian

of the South. Yan Pu and many others were also given honorable posts. A prefect and a military officer were appointed to each district. All the officers and soldiers were duly rewarded, all except the traitor Yang Song, who was condemned to public execution and exposure.

He slandered the able and betrayed his lord,

But what he gained was of no use in the end.

Before glory came to his house he died a shameful death;
And he is an object of contempt for ages to come.

As Hanzhong was quite subdued, Sima Yi, an important official, advised Cao Cao to attack Liu Bei. “The men of Shu are against Liu Bei because of his treacherous treatment of his kinsman Liu Zhang. If on the strength of your present success you press forward, Liu Bei will crumble as a shattered tile. The wise man knows how to seize the right occasion and this is a good opportunity that you should not miss.”

Cao Cao sighed. “Men are insatiable—once you get Long* you want to take Shu.”

Liu Ye supported Sima Yi, saying: “If you delay, Zhuge Liang, who knows how to run the government, will have consolidated their rule while Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and the other bold warriors will be at the head of the army. If the men of Shu once establish themselves, and the points of vantage are firmly held, you will not be able to overcome them.”

Cao Cao replied, “My men have suffered much on this long expedition. We must think of them.” Therefore he took no further action for a time in order to rest his army.

Meanwhile, the populace of Yizhou, having heard of Cao Cao’s occupation of Hanzhong, concluded that they would be his next target, and fear spread among them. Liu Bei called in Zhuge Liang and asked him for advice. Zhuge Liang replied that he could make Cao Cao retreat of his own accord.

“A part of Cao Cao’s army is camped at Hefei because of his fear of Sun Quan. If now we restore those three districts of the Jingzhou region to Wu, and send an eloquent speaker to persuade Sun Quan to attack Hefei, Cao Cao will be off on a southward journey.”

“Who is a suitable person to be the messenger?” asked Liu Bei.

At this Yi Ji replied, “I will go.”

Liu Bei, well satisfied, wrote a letter and prepared gifts. Yi Ji took these offerings, calling in at Jingzhou on the way to tell Guan Yu. Then he went on to Moling to see Sun Quan. After the greetings, Sun Quan asked him the reason for his visit.

Yi Ji replied, “On a former occasion Zhuge Jin came for the three districts that my master agreed to return to you, but the absence of our chief advisor at the time prevented the actual transfer. Now I have brought a letter to ask General Guan to give these districts back to you. The other districts, including Jingzhou and Nanjun, were meant to be restored to you as well, but as Cao Cao has got possession of Hanzhong, there is

no place for General Guan to stay in Shu. Now Hefei is not well defended. We hope you will attack the city, so as to make Cao Cao withdraw to the south, and let my master seize Hanzhong. If that is taken, he will return the whole of the Jingzhou district to you."

"You may go back to the guesthouse and let me discuss this matter with my people."

After Yi Ji had gone, Sun Quan turned to his advisors and asked them what should be done.

Zhang Zhao said, "Liu Bei fears that Cao Cao will attack him so he has resorted to this scheme. However, since Cao Cao is absent in Hanzhong, it will be advantageous to seize the opportunity to take Hefei."

Sun Quan accepted the advice. After he had sent the messenger away he began to prepare for the expedition. He ordered Lu Su to be in charge of the transfer of power of the three districts of Changsha, Jiangxia, and Guiyang. Then he encamped at Lukou and summoned three of his ablest officers to his side: Lu Meng, Gan Ning, and Ling Tong.

Very soon, Lu Meng and Gan Ning arrived. After learning of their lord's intentions, Lu Meng suggested a plan, saying, "Cao Cao has ordered the Prefect of Lujiang to station an army at Wancheng and cultivate a large tract of paddy fields to supply grain for Hefei. Let us first take Wancheng and then attack Hefei."

"This scheme is just after my own heart," said Sun Quan.

So he ordered Lu Meng and Gan Ning to lead the van while he commanded the center, aided by four officers. But the veteran warriors Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang were not called to take part in this expedition, as they were away guarding various positions.

The army crossed the river, captured Hezhou on the way and soon arrived at Wancheng. The prefect, after sending an urgent message to Hefei for help, set himself to strengthen the fortifications against a siege. Sun Quan went very near the city to observe its defense, and a flight of arrows greeted him, hitting his great umbrella. He went back to camp and asked his officers to propose plans to take the city.

One of them suggested sending the soldiers to pile up mounds of earth and attack from the summits, while another recommended setting up long ladders and constructing overhead bridges so that they could attack from above.

But Lu Meng was opposed to both plans. “Such plans need a long time to prepare, and in the meantime their supporters will have come from Hefei. Then it will be hard to capture the city. Now our men have only just arrived and we can take advantage of their high morale to launch a relentless attack. Their fresh fighting spirit will do the work. Tomorrow let us attack at dawn, and the city should fall by noon.”

Sun Quan agreed. So the next morning breakfast was taken at the fifth watch and then the whole army advanced to the city wall. The defenders sent down showers of arrows and stones but were not able to discourage their enemy from the attack. Gan Ning, an iron chain in hand, climbed up the wall at the risk of his life. The prefect ordered his men to shoot at him

but he pushed aside the arrows and bolts and, with his iron chain, knocked the prefect down. Lu Meng himself beat the drum for the attack. The soldiers made a rush forward to ascend the wall, and slew the prefect. His officers and soldiers gave in, and so the city fell to Sun Quan. It was still a long time to noon.

In the meantime, Zhang Liao was bringing his army to aid the prefect. Halfway through the journey he heard that the city had fallen, and so he returned to Hefei.

Soon after the conqueror's entry into Wancheng, Ling Tong arrived with his army. Then banquets were prepared to celebrate the victory and entertain the army. Special rewards were given to Lu Meng, Gan Ning and others who had rendered splendid services at the battle. Lu Meng extolled the prowess of his comrade Gan Ning and yielded him the seat of honor.

But as the cup of felicitation was passing around, Ling Tong's thoughts turned to the enmity he bore Gan Ning for having slain his father, and the praises which Lu Meng now heaped upon his enemy filled Ling Tong's heart with bitterness. For some time he glared savagely at Gan Ning, and then, drawing an attendant's sword, he suddenly rose to his feet and cried, "There is nothing to amuse the assembly. I'll present a sword play."

Gan Ning quickly saw his real intention. He pushed aside his table and laid hold of a halberd in each hand, crying, "See how I'm adept in the use of this weapon."

Lu Meng saw the evil meaning of both, and taking his sword and shield he hastily stepped between the two warriors, shouting, “Neither of you gentlemen is so dexterous as I am.”

Thus he kept the two combatants apart. At the same time the fight was reported to Sun Quan, who hastily jumped into the saddle and rode to the banquet hall. At the sight of their lord, all three immediately put down their weapons.

“I have bidden you two to forget this old grudge,” said Sun Quan. “Why do you bring it up again today?”

Ling Tong bowed to the ground, crying bitterly. After much persuasion from Sun Quan, he finally calmed down.

The next day the army set out for Hefei.

Meanwhile, Zhang Liao was grieving over the loss of Wancheng, when Cao Cao sent a small casket sealed by his own hand with the words, If rebels come, open this, written on the outside.

So when he received the news of the coming of a powerful army, Zhang Liao opened the casket and read the letter inside, which said: “If Sun Quan comes to attack Hefei, Zhang Liao and Li Dian are to go out to oppose him and Yue Jin is to guard the city.”

Zhang Liao showed the letter to his two colleagues.

“What do you think of this?” asked Yue Jin.

Zhang Liao replied, “As our lord is away, Sun Quan thinks that he can certainly overcome us. We must first go out and exert ourselves to the utmost to repel his men so as to dampen their fighting spirit and allay the fears of the populace. Then we’ll hold the city as best as we can.”

But Li Dian was silent, for he was not on friendly terms with Zhang Liao. Seeing this, Yue Jin said, “I think we’d better be on the defensive, since we are greatly outnumbered by our enemy.”

“Gentlemen, it seems you’re only thinking about yourselves and not about the common good,” said Zhang Liao. “I will go out to repel the enemy even if I have to fight to the death.”

Then he told his servants to saddle his steed. At this Li Dian’s higher feelings were aroused, and he rose, saying, “How can I be careless of the common good and indulge in my personal feelings? I’m ready to follow you and do as you command.”

Zhang Liao, elated at winning his support, said, “If so, I’ll ask you to lie in ambush to the north of Xiaoyao Ford. Destroy the bridge there as soon as the army of Wu has crossed. Then Yue Jin and I will smite them.”

Li Dian went away to muster his men and prepare the ambush.

Now the army of Wu was pressing toward Hefei, the advance guard being led by the veterans Lu Meng and Gan Ning, the central force by Sun Quan and Ling Tong, and the other officers following in the rear. The leaders of the van soon ran into Yue Jin, and Gan Ning rode out to engage him. After a

few bouts Yue Jin pretended to be defeated and fled. Gan Ning called his colleague to join him in the pursuit.

When Sun Quan heard that his advance guard had been successful, he hastened his men forward. However, when they got to the north of Xiaoyao Ford there was a series of explosions, and riding toward them were Zhang Liao and Li Dian, coming from separate flanks. Sun Quan, caught totally unprepared for this, was panic-stricken. He at once dispatched some men to call back the advance guard, but before it could arrive, Zhang Liao had come up.

Now Ling Tong, who had with him only three hundred men, could not long withstand the sweeping force of the enemy, but he fought bravely while his lord galloped for the bridge. The southern end of the bridge had already been destroyed and there was a wide breach between the broken end and the shore. Not a single plank was there by which to cross. What could be done? Sun Quan was frightened out of his wits.

“Retrace your steps first and then jump for it!” shouted Gu Li, one of the officers.

Sun Quan took the advice. Backing his horse some thirty feet or so, he then held tight the bridle and lashed it with his whip. The good beast leaped, cleared the chasm, and his master was safe on the southern shore.

Once Dilu leapt across the Tan Stream wide.

Now when defeat did Sun of Wu betide,
And death came threateningly at Xiaoyao Ford,
His steed too leapt, and saved him from the sword.

Having reached the other shore, Sun Quan was helped into a boat and rowed to a place of safety, while Zhang Liao's army was held at bay by Ling Tong and Gu Li. Gan Ning and Lu Meng, coming to his aid, were pursued by Yue Jin at the back and attacked by Li Dian in front, so that their progress was slowed down. And the men of Wu suffered great losses. Ling Tong's force of three hundred perished to a man, but he, although wounded in several places, found a way to the bridge. Finding it destroyed, he fled along the stream. Fortunately he was spotted by Sun Quan from the boat and was presently taken on board. Gan Ning and Lu Meng, after a desperate fight, also managed to escape to the southern shore.

The terrible slaughter at this battle put such fear into the minds of the men of Wu that the very name of Zhang Liao kept children quiet at night.

When Sun Quan reached his camp he richly rewarded Ling Tong and Gu Li. Then he led his army back to Ruxu and began to put his ships in order so that the army and navy might act in unison. He also sent messengers back home to muster more troops for reinforcements.

Zhang Liao, hearing of Sun Quan's new move, reflected that he had insufficient force to meet another attack, so he sent an urgent message to his master in Hanzhong. When he learned about the situation in Hefei, Cao Cao realized that his western expedition would have to take second place to the defense in the south. Nevertheless, he called in his counselors and put a direct question to them.

"Can we take Yizhou now?"

“Liu Bei is now too well prepared to conquer,” replied Liu Ye. “It is better to rescue Hefei and then go down the river to take the south.”

Therefore, leaving Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He to hold two strategically important points in Hanzhong, Cao Cao broke camp and set out toward Ruxu.

The armored horsemen would have conquered Shu,

The ensigns toward the south were turned again.

The subsequent course of the war will be unfolded in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* Capital city of Hanzhong.

* Referring to Hanzhong, in modern Gansu.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

Gan Ning Leads a Hundred Horsemen to Raid Cao Cao's Camp

Zuo Ci Flings a Cup to Taunt Cao Cao

Sun Quan was occupied in mobilizing his men at Ruxu when he heard of the coming of Cao Cao with a very large army to relieve Hefei. After consulting his counselors he sent two officers to take a fleet of fifty large ships to lie in ambush at the port and another one to patrol along the riverbanks.

"It is imperative to inflict a defeat upon Cao Cao's men before they recover from the long march—it will dishearten them," suggested Zhang Zhao.

Looking around at the officers about him, Sun Quan asked, "Who is bold enough to challenge this Cao Cao and so take the keen edge off the spirit of his army?"

Ling Tong offered himself.

"How many men do you need?"

"Three thousand will suffice," replied Ling Tong.

But Gan Ning intervened, saying, “Just a hundred horsemen will be enough to do that—why send three thousand?”

Ling Tong was angry, and he and Gan Ning began to wrangle in the presence of their chief.

“Cao Cao’s army is too strong to be treated lightly,” said Sun Quan.

Therefore he gave the commission to Ling Tong with his 3,000 men, telling him to reconnoiter outside Ruxu, and to fight if he met the enemy.

On their way, Ling Tong and his men very soon saw a whirling cloud of dust, indicating the approach of an army. As soon as they came near enough, Zhang Liao, who led the van, engaged with Ling Tong, and they fought fifty bouts without either gaining an advantage. When Sun Quan learned about this he began to worry lest something should happen to his champion, so he sent Lu Meng to extricate him from the battle and escort him back.

Seeing that Ling Tong had returned, his rival Gan Ning went to Sun Quan and pleaded: “Now let me have the hundred horsemen and I will raid the enemy’s camp tonight. If I lose but one man or one horse I will claim no merit.”

Sun Quan commended his courage and chose a hundred of his best veterans, whom he placed under Gan Ning’s command for the night raid. He also gave the soldiers fifty flasks of wine and fifty catties of mutton.

Returning to his own tent, Gan Ning drew up his hundred men and asked them to sit down around him. Then he filled his silver bowl with wine, and after drinking two bowls he said, “My friends, tonight our orders are to raid the camp of the enemy. Therefore fill your cups and call up all your strength for the task.”

But the men were far from feeling confident—instead they looked at one another, disconcerted. Seeing them in this mood, Gan Ning adopted a fierce tone, drew his sword and cried, “What are you hesitating for? If I, a leader of rank, can risk my life, why can’t you?”

Moved by the courage of the leader, the men rose, bowed their heads, and said they would fight to the last. Then the wine and meat were distributed among them and each one ate his fill. The second watch was chosen as the hour to start, and each man stuck a white goose plume in his helmet so that they could recognize each other in the darkness.

At the appointed time they donned their armor, mounted, and galloped swiftly to Cao Cao’s camp. Quickly throwing aside the deer-horns, or abatis defenses, they burst in with a yell that rose to the very heavens and made straight for the center, hoping to slay Cao Cao himself. But the camp’s center, like an iron barrel, was encircled by a rampart of carts, so that the raiders failed to find a way in.

However, Gan Ning and his hundred riders dashed hither and thither, cutting and slashing, while Cao Cao’s men, without any notion of the number of their assailants, created more disturbance for themselves in their fright. Thus the hundred men had it all their own way and rushed from point to point

slaying whomever they met. But soon the drums beat in every camp and torches were lit and shouts arose, and it was time for the raiders to escape.

Gan Ning led his courageous body of men out through the south gate and quickly away, with never a man daring to block his way. While in flight he met Zhou Tai, who had been sent to help him in case of need— but the need had not arisen for Cao Cao, afraid of an ambush, did not pursue him.

A poem was written in praise of this exploit:

> The drums of war make earth to shake,
>
> When Wu comes near even devils quake.
>
> Men long will tell of that night raid,
> That Gan Ning's goose-plumed warriors made.

So Gan Ning and his hundred heroic riders returned to camp, not a man nor a horse missing. At the camp gate he told his men to beat the drum, blow the fife, and shout "Long life!" Loud cheers rose to the sky as they entered.

Sun Quan himself came out to welcome them. Gan Ning dismounted and prostrated himself. His lord helped him up and took him by the hand, saying, "This expedition of yours must have given the old rascal quite a scare. I would not have let you risk your life if I had not wished to give you the opportunity to display your valor."

Gan Ning's exploit was rewarded with generous gifts, including a thousand rolls of silk and a hundred good swords,

all of which he distributed among his hundred courageous soldiers. Sun Quan, very proud of his subordinate's doughty deed, said, "Cao Cao may have his Zhang Liao, but I can match him with my Gan Ning."

Soon Zhang Liao came to offer another challenge, and Ling Tong, impatient at being excelled by his rival and enemy, begged that he might go out to fight. His request was granted, and he marched out with 5,000 men. Sun Quan, with Gan Ning in his train, followed to watch the encounter.

When both armies had come out on to the plain and were arrayed, Zhang Liao, with Li Dian and Yue Jin on either side, advanced to the front. Ling Tong, sword in hand, galloped out toward him; and, at his chief's command, Yue Jin took the challenge and went to open the combat. They fought to the fiftieth bout and neither seemed to have the better of the other. Then Cao Cao, hearing of the great contest going on, rode up to the battlefield and took position under the great standard to watch the fighting. Seeing both combatants involved in the desperate struggle, he ordered one of his officers to secretly shoot an arrow; the man, creeping up under cover of Zhang Liao, let fly an arrow, striking Ling Tong's steed, which reared and threw down its rider. Yue Jin dashed forward to thrust at the fallen warrior with his spear, but before the blow could land, the twang of another bow was heard and an arrow hit Yue Jin full in the face. He, too, fell from his horse.

Then both sides rushed forward to rescue their champions—the gongs clanged, and the combat ceased. Ling Tong returned to his camp and bowed to his master in gratitude.

“It was Gan Ning who shot the arrow that saved you,” said Sun Quan.

Ling Tong turned to his rival and bowed low. “I did not expect you would be so kind to me, sir,” he said to Gan Ning. This episode ended the enmity between the two men, who thereafter swore eternal friendship.

On the other side, Cao Cao saw to it that his officer’s wound was dressed. The next day he launched a ferocious attack on Ruxu in five directions. He himself led the central army, the other four being led by Zhang Liao, Li Dian, Xu Huang, and Pang De, each with 10,000 men—and all five set out toward the riverbank. Their approach was soon detected by the crew of the naval squadron of Wu and the men were greatly frightened by such a mighty adversary.

But their commander Xu Sheng reproached them. “You’ve been fed by your lord and you must give loyal service. What’s there to be afraid of?”

Gathering some hundreds of his best men into boats, he crossed over to the bank and broke into the army under Li Dian. Meanwhile the other officer, Dong Xi, urged the remaining men on the ships to beat drums and cheer them on. However, a great storm suddenly swept up, lashing the river to fury, and the waves rolled as high as mountains. The larger ship rolled and pitched as if it would overturn, and the men, greatly frightened, started to run for the small boats to save their lives. But Dong Xi threatened them with his sword, cutting down those who tried to flee.

“My orders are to hold this point,” he shouted. “We mustn’t abandon the ship.”

However, as the wind increased its force, the ship capsized, throwing the loyal and bold Dong Xi into the river, and he was drowned. In the meantime, his colleague Xu Sheng was still dashing hither and thither among Li Dian’s men, slaying right and left.

Chen Wu, who was patrolling along the bank, heard the noise of battle and set out to join the fight. On his way he encountered Pang De and his army. A melee ensued between the two troops. Soon news reached Sun Quan, who at once rushed out with Zhou Tai and their men to assist.

There he saw Xu Sheng with his small force from the ships fighting a confused battle with Li Dian and his men. So Sun Quan gave the signal for his troops to go to their aid. Unexpectedly, he was himself surrounded by Zhang Liao and Xu Huang, and soon in desperate straits. From a high point Cao Cao saw his opponent in difficulties, and thought it was his chance to destroy him. So he immediately sent Xu Chu to split Sun Quan’s army in two so that neither half could aid the other.

When Zhou Tai had cut his way out of the enemy encirclement and reached the riverside, he looked for his master. But Sun Quan was nowhere visible, so he dashed once again into the thick of the battle. Coming to his own men, he asked them where Sun Quan was. They pointed to where the encirclement was most dense. Zhou Tai stiffened and dashed in. Presently he reached his lord’s side and cried out, “My lord, follow me and I will cut a way through.”

Zhou Tai mustered all his energy and finally fought his way to the riverbank. Then he turned to look back, and to his great dismay Sun Quan was not behind him. So he turned back a second time, and fought his way to his master's side.

"I cannot get out—the arrows are too thick," said Sun Quan. "What can we do?"

"This time you go in front, my lord, and I will follow."

Sun Quan then rode in front and Zhou Tai followed, protecting him from being harmed by enemies from all around, ignoring the many wounds he suffered and the arrows that penetrated his armor. At last he got clear and Sun Quan was safe. As they reached the riverbank, Lu Meng came up with a naval force and escorted Sun Quan down to a ship.

"I owe my safety to Zhou Tai, who thrice came to my aid," said Sun Quan. "But Xu Sheng is still in the thick of the fight—how can we save him?"

"I will go to his rescue," cried Zhou Tai.

Taking his spear, Zhou Tai again plunged into the battle and finally brought his colleague to safety. Both were severely wounded.

From the shore, Lu Meng ordered his men to keep up a rapid flight of arrows to discourage any pursuers, and in this way the two officers were able to get on board the ships.

Now Chen Wu had been engaged in fighting with Pang De. Being inferior in force and without reinforcements, Chen Wu

was pursued into a valley where the trees and undergrowth were very dense. When he tried to turn around and defend himself, his coat sleeve was caught by the branches, and while so entangled he was killed by Pang De.

Seeing that Sun Quan had escaped, Cao Cao himself led the pursuit to the riverbank, where he ordered his men to shoot at the enemy ships. By this time Lu Meng's men had run out of arrows, but just as they were getting very anxious about what to do, a fleet of ships appeared, led by Lu Xun, son-in-law of Sun Ce. This very large force drove back Cao Cao's men with a fresh flight of arrows. Following up his advantage, he landed to pursue the fleeing enemy troops, capturing thousands of horses and slaying many men, so that in the end it was Cao Cao who was defeated and had to retreat.

Then they sought and found the body of Chen Wu among the slain. Sun Quan was grieved beyond measure when he learned that Chen Wu had been killed and Dong Xi drowned. He sent his men to search for Dong Xi's body in the river, which at last was found. Both officers were buried with great honors.

Grateful for Zhou Tai rescuing him, Sun Quan gave a banquet in honor of his loyal servant, during which he poured a goblet of wine for the warrior, and with tears streaming down his cheeks, gently stroked his wounded back.

"Twice you saved my life, careless of your own," he said. "You have received so many wounds that your back seems to be engraved and painted. Isn't it but natural that I should treat you as one of my own flesh and blood? And entrust you with the command of my army? You are my meritorious general

and I will share with you both glory and disgrace, joy and sorrow."

Then he asked Zhou Tai to take off his robe and show his wounds to all those assembled at the banquet hall. Long deep cuts sprawled all over his body as if his flesh and skin had been scored with a knife. Sun Quan pointed to the wounds, one after another, and asked the brave warrior how each one had been inflicted. And, as Zhou Tai related the stories of his cuts and slashes, for every wound he suffered Sun Quan made him drink a goblet of wine as a reward till he became thoroughly intoxicated. Sun Quan then rewarded him with a green silk umbrella and let him show it wherever he went out as a sign of the glory that was his.

At Ruxu the battle continued but at the end of a month neither side could win a final victory.

Then Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong went to see their master, to whom they said: "Cao Cao is too strong and we cannot overcome him by mere force. If the struggle should prolong you would only lose more men. It is better to seek peace so as to pacify the people."

Sun Quan followed this advice and sent an envoy on a peace mission to Cao Cao's camp, pledging to yield an annual tribute. Knowing that the south was too strong to be overcome in a short time, Cao Cao consented. But he insisted that Sun Quan should withdraw first before his departure for the capital. The envoy returned with this message, and so Sun Quan left for his headquarters in Moling with the greater part of his army, leaving only Zhou Tai and Jiang Qin to hold

Ruxu. Afterwards, Cao Cao left Cao Ren and Zhang Liao in charge of Hefei, while he set off for the capital.

Shortly after his return, all the civil and military officials of the court began to talk about his promotion as Prince of Wei. Only Minister Cui Yan spoke strongly against this.

"Have you forgotten the fate of Xun Yu," warned his colleagues.

"Such times! Such deeds!" cried Cui Yan in a rage. "But this is rebellion and I will have no part in it!"

An enemy of his told Cao Cao of his words, and Cui Yan was thrown into prison. At his trial he glared like a tiger and his very beard curled with contempt—he kept cursing Cao Cao as a wicked rebel who'd betrayed his Emperor. The interrogating magistrate reported his conduct to Cao Cao, who ordered Cui Yan to be beaten to death in prison.

In the fifth month of the twenty-first year of the period of Jian An (A.D. 216), a memorial signed by the court officials was presented to Emperor Xian, proposing that Cao Cao be granted the title of prince for his manifest merits and signal services to the state, exceeding those rendered by any minister before him. The memorial was approved, and a draft edict was prepared. Thrice Cao Cao with seeming modesty pretended to decline the honor, but thrice was his refusal rejected. Finally he made his obeisance and was bestowed the title of "Prince of Wei." To match his new status he was given special privileges, which included a headdress with twelve strings of beads; a chariot with gilt shafts drawn by six steeds; the use of the imperial carriage with all its pomp and

dignity, while the roads were cleared whenever the carriage passed along. A palace was also to be built at Yejun for his use.

Then he began to discuss the appointment of an heir apparent. His first wife, of the Ding family, was without child, but a concubine had borne him a son, Cao Ang, who had been killed in battle when he was at war with Zhang Xiu. A second concubine, of the Bian family, had borne him four sons: Pi, Zhang, Zhi, and Xiong. Therefore he elevated her to the rank of princess-consort in place of Lady Ding. The third son, Zhi, also known as Zi-Jian, was a very talented young man and a fine writer. Cao Cao intended to name him as his heir. The eldest son, Cao Pi, afraid that he might be denied his right of primogeniture, sought advice from Jia Xu, who taught him how to win his father's heart. Thereafter, when bidding farewell to his father before he went on military expeditions, Cao Pi would weep so copiously that the courtiers present were all deeply affected; while his brother Cao Zhi would extol his father's merits and virtue in refined language.

Noting the difference in the behavior of his two sons, Cao Cao began to think that the third son was perhaps too crafty and not as devoted to him as his eldest son. Furthermore, Cao Pi also bought over his father's immediate attendants, who then tried their best to praise his virtue to their master. But Cao Cao was still undecided as to which of the two to name as his heir and he brought the matter to his trusted advisor Jia Xu.

"I would like to name my heir—who do you think is more suitable?"

Jia Xu did not reply, and Cao Cao asked him why.

"I was just recalling something in the past and could not reply at once," said Jia Xu.

"What was on your mind?"

"I was thinking of Yuan Shao and Liu Biao and their sons."

Cao Cao laughed, for he had taken the hint in Jia Xu's answer. Soon after this, he declared his eldest son his heir.

In the tenth month the construction of the palace for the new Prince of Wei was completed and the furnishing began. Rare flowers and uncommon trees from all parts of the land were collected to beautify the gardens of the palace. One agent was sent to Wu and saw Sun Quan, to whom he presented Cao Cao's letter requesting that he be allowed to proceed to Wenzhou to get oranges. At that time, Sun Quan was trying to win Cao Cao's favor, so from the orange trees in his own city he picked forty dan* of very fine fruit and sent them immediately to Yejun.

On the way, the weary bearers of the oranges stopped at the foot of a hill to have a rest. There came along an elderly man, blind in one eye and lame in one leg, who wore a Taoist headdress of white rattan and a black loose robe. He saluted the bearers and stayed to talk.

"Your must be weary carrying these heavy burdens," he said. "Let me help each of you carry a while. What do you say?"

Naturally they were very pleased, and the amiable Taoist bore each load for five li. To their great surprise they found that their burdens became lighter after the Taoist had carried them. Before he left the Taoist said to the man in charge of the party, “I am from the same village as the Prince of Wei. My name is Zuo Ci and my Taoist appellation is Black Horn. When you see the prince you can tell him that I, Zuo Ci, send him my regards.”

With a flick of his sleeves he went away. In due course the orange bearers reached the new palace and the oranges were presented. But when Cao Cao peeled one open he found it was just an empty shell—there was no pulp beneath the rind. Cao Cao, shocked at this, called in the bearers, who told him of the mysterious Taoist they met on the way. Cao Cao, however, did not believe their words.

But just then the gatekeeper came in to tell him that a Taoist called Zuo Ci wished to see him.

“Send him in,” said Cao Cao.

“He is the man we met on the way,” said the bearers when the Taoist appeared.

Cao Cao said curtly, “What sorcery have you been exercising on my beautiful fruit?”

“How could such a thing happen?” said the Taoist with a laugh.

Then he cut open several oranges and showed them to be full of pulp, most delicious to the taste. But when Cao Cao cut open the oranges they were again devoid of any pulp.

Cao Cao was more perplexed than ever. He allowed his visitor to be seated and inquired of the reason. Zuo Ci asked for wine and meat, which were then brought before him. The Taoist ate ravenously, consuming a whole sheep, and drank five dou* of wine. Yet he showed no sign of being excessively stuffed or drunk.

"By what magic is this?" asked Cao Cao.

"I once went into the Emei Mountains† where I studied the Way of Taoism for thirty long years. One day I heard my name called from out of the rocky wall of my cave. I looked, but could see no one. The same thing happened for several days. Then suddenly one day, with a roar like thunder, the wall split asunder, and I saw a sacred book in three volumes called The Supreme Book of Magic. From the first volume I learned to ascend to the clouds astride the wind, and to sail up into the great void itself; from the second to pass through mountains and penetrate rocks; from the third, to become invisible at will or change my shape while traveling over the four seas, and to decapitate a man from a distance with a flying sword or dagger. Your Highness has reached the acme of glory—why not withdraw from your position now and come with me to the Emei Mountains to learn the Taoist wisdom? I will bequeath my three volumes to you."

"Often have I reflected upon this course but what can I do? There is no one to maintain the government," replied Cao Cao.

“There is Liu Bei, a scion of the imperial family. Why not make way for him?” said Zuo Ci. “If you do not, I will send my flying sword after your head.”

“So you are one of his spies,” said Cao Cao, suddenly enraged.

He ordered his guards to seize him, but the Taoist only laughed. And he continued to laugh as they dragged him down and beat him cruelly. But when they looked at their victim they found him sound asleep, as if he felt no pain whatsoever.

This enraged Cao Cao still more. He ordered the guards to throw the Taoist priest into prison and put a large wooden collar around his neck, securing it with nails and chains. But the jailers who watched over him soon noticed that the collar and chains had fallen off while the victim lay fast asleep, not injured in the least.

For seven days they locked him up in prison without giving him any food or water, yet at the end of the week they found him sitting upright on the ground looking rosy-cheeked, the very image of health itself.

The jailers reported this to Cao Cao, who had the prisoner brought before him and questioned.

“I can go without food for dozens of years,” said the Taoist, “or eat a thousand sheep in a day.”

Cao Cao was at the end of his resources, unable to prevail against such a man.

That day there was to be a great banquet at the new palace, and guests came in crowds. When the wine cups were passing freely, suddenly the same Taoist appeared in wooden clogs. All faces turned in his direction, surprised and bewildered. Planting himself in front of the great assembly, the Taoist said, "Your Highness, here you have an abundance of delicacies on the table and a glorious company of guests. Now there are many rare and beautiful objects from various parts of the world. Is there anything lacking on your table? Just name it and I will get it for you."

Cao Cao replied, "Yes, I want a dragon's liver to make soup—can you get that?"

"Where is the difficulty?" replied the Taoist.

With a writing brush the Taoist immediately drew a dragon on the whitewashed wall of the banquet hall. Then he flicked his sleeve over it and the dragon's belly opened of itself, from which he took out the liver all fresh and bleeding.

"You had the liver hidden in your sleeve," said Cao Cao, incredulous. "Then there will be another test," said the Taoist. "It is winter and every plant outside is dead. What flower would you like? Name any one you fancy."

"I want nothing but peony," said Cao Cao.

"That is easy," answered the Taoist.

At his request the attendants brought in a big flower pot, which they placed in full view of the guests. Then the Taoist sprinkled some water over it, and instantly up came a peony

with two fully blooming flowers. The guests were astonished, and they asked the Taoist to be seated and gave him wine and food. Presently a fish dish was brought onto the table.

“We need the perch of the Pine River to make this dish taste best,” said the Taoist.

“How can you get such a fish a thousand li away?” asked Cao Cao.

“What is so difficult?”

He had rod and hook brought to him, went down to the pond below the banquet hall, and very soon dozens of beautiful perch lay on the steps.

“I have always kept these in my pond, of course,” said Cao Cao.

“Do you think you can deceive me? All perch have two gills except those from the Pine River, which have two pairs. That is their distinguishing feature.”

The guests crowded round to look, and, surely enough, the fish had four gills.

“To cook this perch one needs purple sprout ginger, though,” said the Taoist.

“Can you also produce that?” asked Cao Cao.

“No problem.”

He told the attendants to bring in a golden bowl, which he covered with his robe. In no time the special kind of ginger filled the bowl, and he presented it to the host. Cao Cao put out his hand to pick some, when suddenly a book appeared in the bowl. The title was Meng-de's New Treatise, which was the very book he had written on the art of war and later burned. He took it out and read it. Not a word of his treatise was missing.

Cao Cao was mystified. The Taoist took up a jade cup that stood on the table, filled it with fine wine and presented it to Cao Cao.

"Drink this and you will live a thousand years."

"Drink it first yourself," said Cao Cao.

The Taoist took the jade pin from his headdress and made a slit in the cup, dividing the wine into two portions. Then he drank one half and handed the cup with the other half to Cao Cao, who angrily refused it. The Taoist then threw the cup into the air, where it was transformed into a white turtledove, which circled around the banquet hall.

All faces were turned upward following the flight of the bird, and so no one had noticed the departure of the Taoist. But he was gone—and soon the gate warden reported that he had left the palace.

Cao Cao said, "A wizard like this must be put to death or he will do some mischief."

The redoubtable Xu Chu and a company of ironclad cavalry were dispatched to arrest the Taoist. At the city gate they saw the Taoist not far ahead, still wearing his wooden clogs and walking along at a leisurely pace. Xu Chu dashed after him, but swift as he galloped, he could not catch up with the Taoist. He kept up the chase right to a hill, where he saw a shepherd lad with a flock of sheep. The Taoist walked into the sheep, and there he simply vanished. Cao Cao's angry henchman slew the whole flock of sheep and went back, leaving the poor lad weeping bitterly beside his slain sheep.

Suddenly the boy heard a voice from one of the severed heads, telling him to replace the heads on the bodies of his sheep. Terrified, the lad covered his face and fled. Then he heard a voice calling to him from behind: "Don't run away—you'll have your sheep again."

He turned, and lo! The sheep were all alive again and the Taoist was driving them along. The boy was about to ask him how he did that, when the Taoist, with a flick of his sleeves, was gone from sight.

The shepherd went home and told all these marvels to his master, who daring not conceal the truth, reported it to Cao Cao. Then sketches of the Taoist were posted everywhere with explicit orders to arrest him. Within three days, three or four hundred suspects had been arrested in the city and beyond, each of them being blind in one eye, lame in one leg, and wearing a rattan headdress, a black loose robe, and wooden clogs. They were all alike and all answered to the description of the missing Taoist.

The news caused a great sensation in the city. Cao Cao ordered his officers to sprinkle the gathered Taoists with the blood of pigs and sheep to exorcise the witchcraft and then take them away to the drill ground in the south of the city. There he himself led five hundred guards to surround the throng of the arrested and slew them all.

However, after the head was severed, from the neck of each one there flew up a wreath of black vapor, and all these wreaths converged in the air into the image of the real Taoist, who summoned to him a white crane out of the sky and mounted it. Clapping his hands, he cried merrily, "The rats of the earth follow the golden tiger, and the doer of evil will perish in a single day."

The officers were ordered to shoot arrows at both the bird and man. At this a tremendous gale rampaged, sending stones and sand whirling in the air. And an even more incredible thing happened. All the corpses suddenly jumped up from the ground, each holding his own head in his hands, and rushed toward the hall as if to strike Cao Cao. His officers and advisors covered their eyes, too frightened to take care of their master.

> The power of a wicked minister will overturn a state,
>
> The mystical craft of a Taoist produces wonders great.

The fate of Cao Cao will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* One dan is equal to 100 catties, or 110 lbs (50 kilograms).

* One dou is equal to ten sheng, or two gallons (ten liters).

† A famous mountain in modern Sichuan, one of the four Buddhist mountains in China.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

Guan Lu Divines by the Book of Changes

Five Loyal Souls Die for Their Country

The sight of the corpses of the slain rising to their feet in the gale and running toward him was too much for Cao Cao, and he collapsed to the ground. Presently the wind subsided and the corpses disappeared. His attendants helped Cao Cao inside, but the fright resulted in a serious illness.

A poem was written to praise the mystic Taoist:

> He studied his magical books,
>
> He was learned in mystical lore,
> And with magical fleetness of foot
> He could travel the wide world o'er.
> The mystic arts that he knew,
> He employed in an earnest essay
> To reform the bad heart of Cao,
> But in vain; Cao held to his way.

Cao Cao's illness seemed beyond the art of the physicians or the power of drugs. At this time an official called Xu Zhi came from the capital to visit the Prince of Wei at his new palace and was asked to divine by the Book of Changes.*

“Your Highness, have you ever heard of Guan Lu, the man who is most gifted in the skill of divination?” asked Xu Zhi.

“I have heard of him, but I do not know how clever he is. Tell me about him,” replied Cao Cao.

“He is a native of Pingyuan, ugly and coarse in appearance and lives a rather dissipated life, often indulging himself in drinking. His father was once chief of Jiqiu in the Langye district. As a lad Guan Lu loved to study the stars, staying up all night to watch them, in spite of the prohibition of his parents. He used to say that if domestic fowls and wild geese knew the seasons instinctively, how much more should a man know. While playing with other boys he would draw pictures of the sky on the ground, putting in the sun, moon, and stars. When he grew older he understood the Book of Changes very well and could predict accurately by observing the directions of the winds. He was a marvelous mathematician and excellent physiognomist.

“His fame reached the ears of the Prefect of Langye, who called him to his residence for an interview. There were present some hundred or so other guests, every one of them an able speaker.

“‘I am young and lack courage,’ said Guan Lu to the prefect. ‘Could you give me three sheng (liters) of good wine to loosen my tongue?’

“The prefect was surprised at the request, but he had the wine brought to him, and when he had drunk it, Guan Lu asked the prefect, ‘Are these gentlemen seated here going to debate with me?’

“‘No,’ said the prefect. ‘I myself am anxious to be your contender.’

“‘Then they began a discussion upon the meaning of the Book of Changes. Guan Lu’s words poured forth like a torrent, and his ideas were most profound. The prefect tried hard to challenge him with difficult questions but Guan Lu swept them away in a stream of eloquence. So they went on the whole day, without even pausing for food. Both the prefect and his guests were filled with admiration for him. From then on he came to be known as a prodigy.

“He was also famous for his practice of divination. Once there were three brothers of the Guo family who all became lame, and they called in Guan Lu to cast lots and discover the reason for this. Guan Lu said, ‘According to the lots there is a female ghost in your family tomb, who was your aunt, wife of the brother of either your father or your mother. Some years ago, in a time of famine, for the sake of a few measures of grain, you pushed her into a well and crushed her head with a big stone so that she suffered intensely. The poor soul complained to the Most High, and your lameness is retribution for that crime. No prayer will avert the punishment.’ The three brothers wept and admitted their guilt.

“Another time, when he was a guest at the house of the Prefect of An-ping, he was asked to employ his powers for the magistrate of Xindu, whose wife suffered from headaches and whose son from pains in the heart. Guan Lu was asked to discover the reasons. He cast lots and said to the magistrate, ‘At the west corner of your hall there are buried two corpses, one of them holding a spear, the other, a bow and arrows. As the wall is built across them, their heads are inside the wall

but their feet outside. The spearman pierces the head and so your wife has head pains. The archer stabs the heart and so your son's heart suffers anguish.' Following his directions they dug the ground and found, about eight feet down, two coffins, one with a spear inside and the other with a bow and arrows. All were much decayed. Guan Lu told them to remove the bones and bury them ten li away from the house. After that the woman and her son suffered no more.

"Another time when the magistrate of Guantao, who had been promoted to the prefectship and was leaving for his new post, Guan Lu went to see him off. One of the guests present mentioned that Guan Lu could divine what was hidden from sight. The prefect doubted such powers and said he would put them to a test. He got a swallow's egg, a wasp's nest, and a spider, and concealed them in three separate boxes. Then he asked Guan Lu to guess the contents. Having made the divination, Guan Lu wrote three quatrains:

> The latent life will declare itself,
>
> It will cling to your lordly hall,
> As either a male or a female.
>
> Wide wings will prevent its fall. — This is a swallow's egg.
>
> A many-chambered dwelling
>
> Is hanging to your eaves,
> Each room has a poisonous tenant
> That will die when fall comes. — This indicates a wasp's nest.

This is a long-shanked, trembling thing,

Who spins a thread from his inside
And spreads a fine spun net for flies;

He profits most at eventide. — This is a spider.

“All those present were simply amazed.

“An old woman in his village lost a cow and came to him for help. After the divination he told her that seven men had taken away the cow and were cooking it on the bank of a stream in the north. If she went with all speed she would find the skin and the flesh. She went and found the seven men hidden behind a small shanty, boiling the beast. Most of the cow’s flesh was still there. She told the prefect, who arrested the seven men and punished them. Then he asked the old lady how she came to know exactly who the offenders were, and she told him about Guan Lu. Incredulous, the prefect sent for Guan Lu and set him the following test. He placed his seal and a pheasant’s feather in a box and asked him what was hidden inside. Guan Lu’s reply again came in two quatrains:

Square inside, outside so round,

Beauteous colors here abound.

The jewel within is held secure
And what it witnesses is sure. — This is a seal.

There is a bird on the rocky steep,

Its body with flame seems aglow,
Its wings are barred yellow and black,
At sunrise it ne'er fails to crow. — This is a pheasant's feather.

"The prefect, immensely impressed, treated the marvelous diviner with great honor.

"One day, when walking in the country, Guan Lu saw a youth ploughing in the field. After watching him for a long time, Guan Lu suddenly asked him his name and age.

"'My name is Zhao Yan, and I am nineteen,' said the young man, who then asked Guan Lu who he was.

"'I am Guan Lu. I see a sign of early death about your eyebrows, and I fear you will be done with life within three days. It is a great pity that one so handsome as you should die so young.'

"Zhao Yan dropped his hoe and hurried home to tell his father, who at once set out to find Guan Lu. Having caught up with him, the father threw himself to the ground and begged Guan Lu to save his son.

"'How can I avert the doom? It is fate,' said Guan Lu.

"'Please have pity on me! I have but this one son.'

"And the son added his tears and prayers to those of his father's. Moved by compassion, Guan Lu turned to the lad and said, 'Get ready a bottle of good wine and some venison. Tomorrow take these with you to the South Hill where,

underneath a big tree, you will see two men seated on boulders playing wei-qi. One of them, an ugly man dressed in a white robe, will be seated facing south while the other, a handsome man dressed in a red robe, will be seated facing north. They will be deeply absorbed in their game and will not notice who offers them food and wine, which you will humbly present on your knees. When they have eaten and drunk, you will prostrate yourself and with tears beg them to prolong the length of your life. You will certainly gain an increased span of your days, but, above all things, do not mention that I have instructed you what to do.'

"The father kept Guan Lu in his house as a guest, and the next day the son went out as he was instructed. He climbed into the hill and soon came upon the two men seated beneath a magnificent pine tree, playing wei-qi. They seemed oblivious to all around them. The young man presented the wine and the food on his knees, and the two men, engrossed in the game, ate absentmindedly. When the wine and the meat had been consumed, the young man prostrated himself and implored them for long life. They were greatly startled.

"'This must be Guan Lu's doing,' said Red Robe. 'Still, as we have accepted his gifts we must have pity on him.'

"White Robe then took out a book that he kept by his side and found the place where the young man's name was listed.

"'You are nineteen this year and your life is at its end,' he said to the young man. 'But I will insert a "nine" before the "ten,"* making it read ninety and nine, and that is the age you will attain. But when you go back, tell Guan Lu he is not to betray the secrets of fate, or Heaven will surely punish him.'

“Then Red Robe took out a pen and added his signature. A waft of fragrant wind passed, and the two men, now transformed into two cranes, rose into the sky and flew away.

“The young man came back home and told his father and Guan Lu what had happened. Guan Lu told him that the red-robed man was the Star of the Southern Dipper, and the white-robed man the Star of the Northern Dipper.

“‘But I was told that the Northern Dipper consists of nine stars,’ said the lad, dubious. Why is there only one man?’

“‘Separately they are nine, but they combine to form one. The Northern Dipper records deaths, whereas the Southern Dipper, births. Now that the extra figure has been added you will live up to the age of ninety-nine. There is no need for anxiety.’

“Father and son both bowed to him in deep gratitude. Afterwards, Guan Lu seldom divined for people lest he should betray Heaven’s secrets. Now he resides at Pingyuan. If you want to know your fate, why not summon him?”

Guan Lu was sent for and he came. After he had made his obeisance, Cao Cao asked him to divine for him.

Guan Lu at once found that the illness was only the result of some magical tricks, not worth worrying about. Cao Cao was much relieved in his mind, and his health gradually improved.

Cao Cao next asked him about the future of the state. After making the necessary calculations, the prophet said:

Three-eight crosswise,

The yellow boar meets the tiger.
South of Dingjun,
The loss of one limb.*

Then Cao Cao asked him how long his life would last. After divining, he replied:

At the Lion Palace

A place is secured.

Thrive is the Prince's way
And his posterity will come to high honor.

When Cao Cao asked him to explain what this meant, Guan Lu replied, "Divination is the work of the universe and is not to be foreknown. After some time it will manifest itself."

Cao Cao was pleased and wanted to keep such a man near him, so he offered him the post of historiographer at his court, but was declined.

"My destiny is mean and my luck, despicable," said Guan Lu. "I am not equal to such an office and dare not undertake it."

When Cao Cao asked him the reason he continued, "My forehead has no bony fullness; my eyes no steady expression; my nose no straight bridge; my feet no solid heels; and my back and my abdomen are equally deficient. I am fit only to control evil spirits, but not to rule living men."

“What do you think of my physiognomy?”

“What can a minister of your exalted rank desire further?” asked Guan Lu.

Although Cao Cao pressed him to say more, the soothsayer only smiled. Then Cao Cao asked him to look at all the officials around.

“Every one of them is an official equal to the administration of a state,” said Guan Lu.

But when Cao Cao asked him about their fate, the soothsayer would not give a clear and full reply. A poem says:

Guan Lu was a seer of old,

Stars to him their secrets told.

Mysteries, occult and dim,
Were as daylight unto him.

His subtlest intellect
Could the shade of death detect,
But the secrets of his skill
Died with him—and are secrets still.

Again Cao Cao asked him to divine concerning his rivals of Wu and Shu. He predicted that Wu would lose a major official and Shu would encroach on his territory. Cao Cao suspected the accuracy of these prophecies but soon one of the events manifested itself, for a messenger came from Hefei to say that Lu Su had died.

Cao Cao, now apprehensive of what might happen in Shu, hurriedly sent a man into Hanzhong for news, and the scout returned to say that Zhang Fei and Ma Chao had stationed an army at Xiabian, aiming to capture the pass. Cao Cao was angry and inclined to re-enter Hanzhong; but he consulted the great soothsayer, who advised him not to move.

"In the coming spring there will be a conflagration in the capital," he said.

Having witnessed the accuracy of Guan Lu's predictions, Cao Cao was in no mood to neglect the warning. He stayed on in his palace, but he sent Cao Hong with 50,000 men to assist in the defense of the Hanzhong region, and ordered Xiahou Dun with 30,000 men to guard the streets of the capital against any potential attack from his enemy. He placed Wang Bi in command of the Imperial Guard.

Sima Yi warned him against this final appointment. "Wang Bi is given to too much drinking and is too lenient. He is not a suitable man for such a post."

Cao Cao replied, "He has followed me through every difficulty and danger. He is loyal and diligent, with a heart solid as stone or iron. He is the right man for the post."

So ignoring Sima Yi's warning, he appointed Wang Bi commander of the Imperial Guard, to camp outside the East China Gate of the capital.

Now the time was the early months of the twenty-third year of Jian An. There was a man called Geng Ji, a native of Luoyang, who once worked in Cao Cao's residence in a

subordinate capacity and had later been promoted to a better post. He had a good friend whose name was Wei Huang. These two were greatly distressed at Cao Cao's promotion to princely rank and his use of the imperial chariot.

Geng Ji said, "This rebel Cao Cao behaves worse every day. He intends to usurp the throne, I'm sure. How can we, as Han officials, thwart him in his wickedness?"

"I have a friend named Jin Yi, who is a descendant of a prime minister of Han and an enemy of Cao Cao's," said Wei Huang. "Besides, he is friendly with Wang Bi. If he can assist us we'll succeed in destroying Cao Cao."

"But if he's friendly with Wang Bi he won't assist us!" said Geng Ji.

"Let's go and sound him out," said Wei Huang.

So the two went to see Jin Yi, who received them in the inner hall.

Wei Huang spoke first: "We know you're on most friendly terms with Commander Wang Bi, and so we've come to ask a favor of you."

"What is it?"

"We hear that the Prince of Wei will soon accede to the throne. Then you and your friend Wang Bi will surely advance to offices of great honor. When that day comes, we hope you won't desert us but recommend us for employment. We'd be most grateful for your kindness."

Jin Wei, flicking down his sleeves, rose angrily. At that instant the attendant brought in the tea for the visitors. He snatched it from the serving man and poured it on the floor.

Wei Huang started up in feigned alarm.

“How have I offended you, my good, old friend?” he cried.

“I have been friends with you because you are descendants of men who have served Han faithfully. But instead of trying to repay the debt you owe the Emperor, you desire to assist one who is his enemy. Do you think I can regard you as friends? How could I look the world in the face?”

“But it’s destiny, one can’t help it,” said Geng Ji.

As Jin Yi grew still more angry, the two visitors were convinced that at heart he was loyal to Han. Then they told him of their true intention.

“Our real desire is to destroy this rebel, and we’ve come to ask you for help. Just now we were testing how you really felt.”

“My family has been in the service of the Hans for generation upon generation. Do you think I’d willingly follow a rebel? If you, sirs, are really thinking of restoring the dynasty, please tell me your plans.”

“Unfortunately we have only the desire, but not the plan, to destroy the rebel,” said Wei Huang.

Jin Yi said, “We must rely on forces from within and supporters from without. If we slay Wang Bi we can get his troops to help the Emperor. Then with the help of Liu Bei, we should be able to destroy the rebel Cao Cao.”

Hearing Jin Yi’s plan, the other two clapped their hands in approval.

“And I have two bosom friends who’ll certainly join us,” said Jin Yi. “Both of them have the murder of a father to avenge. They’re the sons of the court physician Ji Ping, who was tortured to death by Cao Cao, together with Dong Cheng and the others. The two sons escaped death at the time by escaping but have secretly returned and are now staying outside the capital. If we ask them for help they will not refuse.”

His two friends rejoiced at the prospect of further help, and the two Ji brothers were called forth. Soon they arrived, and the plan was laid before them. Weeping with deep gratitude for their friends and intense hatred for the torturer of their father, they swore to aid in the destruction of Cao Cao.

Jin Yi suggested that they took action on the fifteenth day of the first month,* as the city would then be lit by lights and fire everywhere for the celebration of the lantern festival.

Turning to Geng Ji and Wei Huang, he added: “You two are to lead out your servants and make your way quickly to Wang Bi’s camp. When you see a fire breaking out inside the capital, burst in, slay Wang Bi and follow me into the palace. We’ll then request the Emperor to ascend the Tower of the

Five Phoenixes, where he'll assemble his officers and issue orders to destroy the rebels."

To the two Ji brothers, he said: "You're to make your way into the city and set fires going. Raise your voices to call on the populace to aid you in destroying the enemy of the state. In the meantime, try to delay any rescue force inside the city. When the Emperor has issued the edict and the disturbance is calmed, we'll mobilize an army to Yejun to seize Cao Cao. By then, a messenger will have been dispatched with a summons for Liu Bei. Tonight we've decided upon our plan and when the day comes we'll begin our action at the second watch. We mustn't bring misfortune to ourselves like Dong Cheng."

All five swore before Heaven and smeared their lips with blood to pledge to be true. After this, each returned to his own home to prepare arms and call up their men.

Both Geng Ji and Wei Huang had a large number of servants, whom they armed. The Ji brothers also got together some hundreds of men, pretending that they were preparing for a hunting party.

Before the time fixed for their operation, Jin Yi went to see Wang Bi, to whom he said, "The country has enjoyed some peace now and the prestige of the Prince of Wei extends over all the land. The lantern festival is drawing near. I think we must have the lights and fireworks out to mark the joy and felicitation of the occasion."

Wang Bi agreed and had notices put out to tell the residents to hang out lanterns and decorations for the festival. On the

night of the full moon, the sky was very clear. The moon and stars vied for brilliance. Among the "six streets and the three market places" of the city lanterns were hung out in profusion, and the people took advantage of the occasion to have a wonderful time. They were not to fear the interference of city guards or mind about the passing of time—all was pure gaiety.

That night Wang Bi and his colleagues had a feast in their camp. Just after the second watch they heard a great shouting in the camp, and reports came in to say that a fire had started in the rear. Wang Bi hurriedly left the table and went outside, where he saw flames leaping up on every side and heard shouts of "Kill!" rising to the very sky. He thought the camp had certainly mutinied, and, jumping on his horse, exited by the south gate. Just outside he ran into Geng Ji, who fired an arrow that struck him in the shoulder. He nearly fell from the wound, but he got away toward the west gate. He found he was pursued by armed men, so he gave up his horse and went on foot. Presently he came to the house of Jin Yi and hammered at the door.

Now the fire in the camp had been raised by Jin Yi's men, and he himself had led his servants to assist his friends in fighting. Hence when Wang Bi came to his door there was but the womenfolk left in his house. When his wife heard the clamor at the door she thought Jin Yi had come back, and before opening the door she asked, "Have you killed Wang Bi?"

This was a great shock to him, but it told Wang Bi that his friend was involved in the plot. Therefore he fled further to the house of Cao Xiu and told him that Geng Ji and Jin Yi had

raised a disturbance. Cao Xiu immediately armed himself, mounted, and led a troop to suppress the uprising. He found fires on all sides, and the Tower of the Five Phoenixes was also caught in flames. The Emperor had fled into the recesses of the palace, and Cao Cao's trusted palace guards defended the palace like grim death.

In the city the crowd was shouting, "Slay Cao Cao and restore the Hans."

By this time the disturbance had also reached Xiahou Dun, who had been commanded by Cao Cao to watch over the capital, and had camped five li from the city. When he saw the conflagration start up he mobilized the army and surrounded the city with his main force, while sending a body of soldiers to reinforce Cao Xiu within the capital.

Inside the city fighting went on all night. Without reinforcements the small band of loyalists were entirely on their own. Soon it was reported that Jin Yi and the Ji brothers had been slain. Geng Ji and Wei Huang tried to escape from one of the gates, but they ran into Xiahou Dun's main force and were captured. The few men with them were all killed.

When the fighting subsided, Xiahou Dun went into the city and detailed his men to put out the fires. He also rounded up the whole households of the five organizers of the uprising. Then he sent a dispatch to Cao Cao, who sent back orders to execute Geng Ji and Wei Huang and put to death in public all the members of the five families. He also told him to arrest every official of the court and send them all to Yejun.

Xiahou Dun took his two chief prisoners to the place of execution.

Geng Ji shouted fearlessly, “Alive I have failed to slay you, Cao Cao— dead I will be a vengeful spirit to smite you.”

The executioner struck him on the mouth with his sword, so that blood gushed out, but he continued to curse as long as he could. His comrade Wei Huang dashed his face on the ground crying, “Hateful! Hateful!” and ground his teeth till he broke them to fragments. And he died.

Who can with outstretched hands uphold the sky

Or thrones maintain by simple loyalty?

Han’s day was done; two would avert the doom,
But failed, they carried anger to their tombs.

Xiahou Dun carried out his chief’s orders and sent the arrested officials to Yejun. There, Cao Cao set up two flags, one red and one white, on the drill ground. Then he addressed the officials.

“In this recent rebellion some of you went out to extinguish the fire, while some of you stayed inside. Those of you who went to put out the fire, stand by the red flag; and those of you who remained indoors, go to the white flag.”

The officials thought to themselves, “Certainly there can be nothing wrong in trying to put out a fire.” So most of them placed themselves under the red flag—only about a third went to the white one.

Then the order was given to seize all those by the red flag.

They protested. “We are innocent!” they cried.

Cao Cao said, “At that time your intention was not to put out the flames but to aid the rebels.”

All of them, three hundred or more victims, were taken down and executed by the banks of the Zhang River, while those who stood under the white flag were rewarded with gifts and allowed to return to the capital.

Since Wang Bi had died from his arrow wound and was buried with great honor, Cao Xiu was given command of the Imperial Guard. To replace all the executed court officials, Cao Cao made a number of new appointments. Zhong Yao was created prime minister and Hua Xin became a chief minister.

The occasion was also used to create six levels of marquis, with three grades in each, so eighteen in total. There were seventeen types of marquis in regions within the passes. And all these marquises had golden seals of office with purple ribbons. There were also sixteen grades of marquis in regions both inside and outside the passes. They had silver seals with tortoise ornaments on the back and black ribbons. There were five classes of Da-fu with fifteen grades, and these had brass seals with chain ornaments and black ribbons. And with all these various grades of rank and nobility reorganized, the court was entirely transformed. There were new ranks and new men for every office.

Cao Cao then remembered Guan Lu's warning about a conflagration in the capital and wished to reward the soothsayer for his prescience, but he would accept nothing.

Meanwhile, Cao Hong arrived in Hanzhong with an army. Placing Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He in command of key positions, he himself led his troops to counter the men of Shu. At that time Zhang Fei, assisted by Lei Tong, was holding Baxi, while Ma Chao was stationed at Xiabian and had sent Wu Lan out as van leader to reconnoiter. On the way he encountered Cao Hong—Wu Lan wanted to retreat but a minor officer, Ren Kui by name, urged him to fight.

"Our enemy has only just arrived. If we do not dishearten them how can we return and face our chief?" he argued. So saying, he rode out to challenge. Cao Hong himself accepted his challenge, and Ren Kui succumbed in the third encounter. Cao Hong pressed on, and Wu Lan was driven off in a serious defeat. When he returned to see Ma Chao, he was blamed for his rash action.

"Why did you attack without my orders and bring about this defeat?"

"It was the fault of Ren Kui, who would not listen to me."

Ma Chao told him to hold the city firmly and not to go out and fight. On the other hand, he sent a report to Chengdu and awaited orders for further actions. Seeing that Ma Chao remained inactive for several days running, Cao Hong suspected some ruse was being planned, and retreated to Nanzheng. Here he was visited by Zhang He, who asked his chief why he had retreated following the successful attack.

“Ma Chao declined to come out to fight. I suspected some ruse was being designed,” he replied. “Besides, when I was at Yejun, I heard that that wonderful soothsayer, Guan Lu, foretold the loss of a major officer here. So I thought I should be careful.”

Zhang He laughed. “General, you’ve been a fighting man for half your lifetime and yet you heed the sayings of a soothsayer! I may be of small wit, but I’ll take Baxi with my own troops. The seizure of that city will be the key to the capture of the whole of Shu.”

“The commander at Baxi is Zhang Fei,” said Cao Hong. “He’s no ordinary man to meet. We must be careful.”

“All the others fear this Zhang Fei, but I look upon him as a mere nobody! I’ll capture him this time!”

“But if you fail, what then?”

“Then I will pay the penalty of death.”

Cao Hong made him put this down in writing, and then Zhang He set out on the campaign.

The proud are often defeated,

The rash seldom succeed.

What happened to Zhang He will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* An ancient book of divination, probably the work of several Confucian scholars in the periods of Warring States and Qin Dynasty. The traditional Chinese theory of the interplay of ying and yang was first expounded in this book.

* The Chinese way of writing “nineteen” is to put a “ten” first and then a “nine” (10+9), while for “ninety-nine” it is to write a “nine” first, then a “ten” and another “nine” (9+10+9). Hence it is possible to insert a “nine” before the “ten.”

* See Chapter Seventy-One for an explanation of these four lines.

* According to the lunar calendar, the fifteenth of the first month is celebrated as the lantern festival, when every household would make special lanterns and hang them out for all to see. The tradition is still observed to a lesser degree today.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

Fierce Zhang Fei Takes Wakou Pass by a Clever Scheme

Aged Huang Zhong Captures Mount Tiandang by a Stratagem

Zhang He's army, with which he felt so sure of victory, consisted of 30,000 men, who were in three camps protected by hills. These camps were named after the three hills Dangqu, Mengtou, and Dangshi respectively. Leaving half the men in each camp to maintain a defense he set out with the other half to capture Baxi.

The news soon reached Baxi, and Zhang Fei called in his colleague Lei Tong for counsel. Lei Tong said, "The country here is dangerous and the hills are precipitous, excellent for ambushing. You go out to give battle, General, and I will prepare a surprise attack to aid you. We are certain to capture Zhang He."

Zhang Fei took the advice and gave 5,000 men to Lei Tong for the ambush while he himself, with double the number, went to a point thirty li away, where he encountered his opponent. The two armies having deployed in battle formations, Zhang Fei rode out and challenged Zhang He to one-to-one combat. Zhang He galloped out to meet him.

After some twenty bouts Zhang He's men in the rear suddenly began to shout as they saw banners of Shu among some hills behind them. Zhang He dared not continue to fight after this, and he fled. Zhang Fei pursued him and Lei Tong also appeared to his front. So, trapped between two enemy forces, Zhang He lost the day. Zhang Fei and his comrade continued the chase into the night, till they drove their opponent back to his camp at the Dangqu Hill.

Zhang He reformed to defend the three camps, piling up logs and stones to create barricades, and remained behind his defenses.

Zhang Fei made a camp ten li away. The next day he went forth and offered battle, but Zhang He ignored him. Seated at the top of the hill, he drank wine to the accompaniment of trumpets and drums, and did not come down. Zhang Fei told his soldiers to shout insults, but these had no effect. On the following day, Lei Tong's challenge again went unanswered. Lei Tong drove his men up the hill but logs and stones were rolled down, forcing him to retreat. Then Zhang He's men in the other two camps came out to attack and Lei Tong was worsted.

On the third day Zhang Fei again offered battle, but there was no response. Again the soldiers yelled every form of insult, but from the hilltop Zhang He only replied with similar abuse.

The defensive tactics of his enemy exasperated Zhang Fei, but he was quite powerless. This stalemate lasted for more than fifty days.

Then Zhang Fei made a strong stockade just in front of the hill, where day after day he drank till he became quite drunk. And when he was thus, he would sit by the hill and revile his opponent.

About this time Liu Bei sent gifts to reward the army, and the messenger went back to tell Liu Bei that his brother was saturating himself in wine. This news startled Liu Bei, who lost no time in seeking advice from Zhuge Liang.

But Zhuge Liang was jocular, saying with a smile, “I see. Let us send him fifty vessels of the best brew of Chengdu. He probably has but poor stuff in the camp.”

“But he has always had a weakness for wine, and he used to fail because of it. Why do you want to encourage him to drink by sending him more wine?”

“My lord, can it be that you do not know your brother, even after all these years? He has always been brave and headstrong, yet when we first entered Shu he released Yan Yan, which is not what a dumb warrior would have done. Now he has been wrapped in a deadlock with Zhang He for nearly two months; every day after drinking, he sits in front of the hill and abuses his enemy, treating him with sheer contempt. This is not mere indulgence in wine, but a scheme to get the better of Zhang He.”

“This may be so,” replied Liu Bei, “but there is no harm in being more cautious. Let Wei Yan go and help him.”

Zhuge Liang sent Wei Yan with the wine, and the carts set out, each flying a yellow flag with writing in large characters: Fine wine for the troops at the battlefield.

When Wei Yan reached the camp he handed over the wine, which he said was a gift from their lord. And Zhang Fei received it with due respect.

He told Wei Yan and Lei Tong to take a troop each and move out on the two wings when they saw a red flag hoisted up. Then he had the wine laid out and began to drink, while soldiers put up a great display of flags and rolling of drums.

Spies reported all this to Zhang He on the hilltop and he came out to look for himself. There he saw his opponent seated in his tent drinking, while two soldiers wrestled before him for his amusement.

"He humiliates me too much," said Zhang He, and he gave orders to prepare for a night attack on the enemy camp. His own men should do the raiding and the other two camps were to support them.

There was little moonlight that night, and Zhang He took advantage of the darkness to steal down the side of the hill and to the front of the enemy camp. From a distance he saw Zhang Fei drinking in his tent amid a blaze of lights. With a loud yell he dashed into the tent, and at the same time drums rolled on the hilltop in support of the advance. But Zhang Fei just sat there without stirring in the least. Zhang He rushed forward, thrust fiercely with his spear, and pierced his opponent. Zhang Fei toppled over but, lo! it was a Zhang Fei of straw! Zhang He hastened to turn back. At that moment he

heard a string of explosions and a warrior appeared before him, barring his way. It was the real Zhang Fei, as the big, round eyes and thundering voice quickly made clear.

With spear set, he rode toward Zhang He. The two warriors fought many bouts illuminated by the gleaming light of the fire. All the while Zhang He waited in vain for assistance from his comrades in the other two camps. How could he know that his reinforcements had been driven back by Wei Yan and Lei Tong? And that the two camps were now held by his enemies? As his colleagues did not come he was quite helpless—and, to add to his discomfit, the glare of fire on the hill told him of the seizure of his own camp. Having lost all three camps, Zhang He could do nothing but flee to Wakou Pass.

So Zhang Fei won a tremendous victory. The news of the success delighted Liu Bei, and he realized then that Zhang Fei's drinking had been part of a stratagem to entice his enemy into the open and defeat him.

Zhang He retreated to Wakou Pass, but with the loss of more than half of his army. He sent an urgent message to his chief to ask for assistance.

Cao Hong was very angry. "He would not listen to me and insisted on going. Now he has lost a key strategic point and yet he tries to seek help from me."

So he refused to send aid. Instead, he ordered Zhang He to go out and fight. Afraid of offending his chief, Zhang He dared not disobey. Finally he decided upon a plan of action. He sent

out two bodies of men to lay ambushes on some byroads in front of the pass.

Before they left, he said to them: “I will feign defeat and flee. Zhang Fei will surely follow and then you can cut off his retreat.”

However, when he marched his men out that day he met Lei Tong. The two engaged in battle and Zhang He soon ran away. Lei Tong pursued and fell into the ambush. Then Zhang He turned back and slew Lei Tong. The defeated men went back and told Zhang Fei, who came up to avenge his comrade.

Zhang He again employed the same stratagem—he feigned defeat and fled, but Zhang Fei did not pursue. Zhang He turned back to fight again and then tried the ruse a second time—but Zhang Fei, knowing full well what it meant, simply withdrew.

Back in his own camp, Zhang Fei said to Wei Yan: “Zhang He plotted the death of Lei Tong by leading him into an ambush, and now he attempts to lure me into another. Why don’t we try to catch him by his own game?”

“But how?” asked Wei Yan.

“Tomorrow I will lead a troop forward, while you follow me with a company of veterans. When his ambushing forces come out from their hiding places, you can smite them, sending half your men against each. In addition, fill the byroads with dozens of carts loaded with combustibles and

raise a fire there to block the passage. In the confusion I will try to capture Zhang He and avenge the death of Lei Tong."

Having decided on the plan, Zhang Fei went out the next day, and Zhang He came to fight. After ten bouts, Zhang He resorted to his old trick and ran away, and this time Zhang Fei pursued. Zhang He, now fleeing, now stopping to exchange a blow or two, led his opponent through the hills and into a valley. There he halted, turning his rearguard to face the enemy and offer battle.

It was now the moment when he expected his hidden men to appear and surround Zhang Fei. But none emerged. He did not know that his ambush had been broken up by Wei Yan's brave men and driven into the valley, where the road was filled with cartloads of combustibles, and that the valley was all aflame, blocking the way out.

Zhang Fei pressed on with the attack, and the rout was complete. Zhang He, fighting desperately, managed to get through to Wakou Pass, where he mustered the remnants of his men and set up defenses.

Zhang Fei and Wei Yan then tried to take the pass, but day after day they failed. Zhang Fei, seeing no hope of success, retreated twenty li. From this point he and Wei Yan went out to explore the country with a small following of riders to reconnoiter certain paths. While scouting they observed some bearers, men and women, clambering up a pathway, pulling down the creepers and pushing aside the grasses.

"That is the way to take Wakou Pass," cried Zhang Fei, pointing with his whip to the wayfarers.

He ordered his soldiers not to scare the people, but to call gently and bring them to him. They soon brought the people before their leader, who spoke to them kindly and put them at ease.

"Where did you come from?" asked Zhang Fei.

"We are natives of Hanzhong and are going home. We heard that there was fighting and that the high road was blocked, and so we are taking this way through Cang Stream, into the Zitong Mountains, and down Guijin River to get back to our homes in Hanzhong."

"Can one reach Wakou Pass by this path? And how far is it?"

The country people replied: "The rear of the pass can be reached from a pathway in the Zizhuang Mountains."

For this information Zhang Fei rewarded them by taking them into his camp and giving them a good meal. Then he told Wei Yan to make a frontal attack on the pass, while he himself led some light horses to attack it from the rear by way of the mountains.

At the pass, Zhang He was grieving that his chief had sent no help. Soon Wei Yan's attack was reported. He girded on his armor and was about to ride out when there came the startling news that fire had started at half a dozen places behind the pass and it was not clear from where the enemy had come. So Zhang He decided not to face Wei Yan in front, but instead to meet this unknown foe behind. To his horror, when the flags were unfurled, his eyes fell on the terrible figure of Zhang Fei. Away he fled along a pathway.

But the path was too narrow for his steed, and as Zhang Fei pressed very hard upon him, he abandoned his horse and ran up the mountainside on foot, following whatever paths he could find. When he finally outran his pursuers he had just a dozen followers left of his army of 30,000 men. It was a small and dejected party that trudged its weary way on foot into Nanzheng. Cao Hong was very angry at the sight.

"I told you not to go, but you were willful. And you gave a written pledge. Now you have lost all your men, and yet you do not commit suicide. Why have you come back?"

Cao Hong ordered his guards to put him to death. At this an officer called Guo Huai interceded.

"An army is easily raised—a leader is hard to find," said the man. "Though he is guilty, he is a great favorite with our prince and I think you should spare him. You can give him another 5,000 men and send him to take Jiameng Pass. This move will affect the deployment of Liu Bei's forces at all his stations. Consequently, the threat against Hanzhong will be diminished. If he should fail a second time you can punish him for both faults."

Cao Hong accepted his advice and so Zhang He was given command of another 5,000 men to take Jiameng Pass.

The officers he was going to confront at the pass were Meng Da and Huo Jun. Hearing of his approach, the two, however, were at variance—the former desiring to go out to meet Zhang He, the latter insisting on a firm defense. Meng Da, set on having his way, went out to give battle and was defeated. Huo Jun reported this to Chengdu, where Liu Bei at once

called in his chief advisor to consider the matter. Zhuge Liang assembled all the chief officers in the hall.

“Jiameng Pass is in danger,” he said. “We must get Yi-de back from Lang-zhong to drive off Zhang He.”

Fa Zheng replied, “But he is encamped at Wakou Pass in defense of the Langzhong region, which is no less important than Jiameng. I don’t think he should be recalled. Choose one among the officers here to go and defeat Zhang He.”

Zhuge Liang laughed, “Zhang He is a renowned warrior—no ordinary officer will avail. Yi-de is the only man to send, the only one equal to the task.”

At once an officer stood out, crying angrily: “Commander, why do you despise us all? Incapable as I am, I will slay this Zhang He and lay his head before you.”

All eyes centered on the speaker, who was the veteran Huang Zhong.

“General, you’re bold enough, but what about your age? I fear you’re no match for Zhang He.”

Huang Zhong’s white hair bristled as he said, “Old I may be, but these two arms can still pull the three-hundred-catty bow, and the vigor of my body is far from spent. Am I not strong enough to meet such a poor thing as Zhang He?”

“General, you’re nearly seventy—can you still claim you’re not aged?”

Huang Zhong tore down the hall. Seizing one of the great swords off the rack, he whirled it and made it fly. And the stiffest bows that hung on the wall he snapped in two in quick succession.

"Well, if you go, who do you want to be your second?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"I prefer old general Yan Yan. And if there is the least neglect of duty, well, you may have my hoary head."

Liu Bei was pleased and he immediately sent these two to go and fight Zhang He.

Zhao Yun, however, said to Zhuge Liang in protest: "Zhang He is invading Jiameng Pass, and this fight is no child's play, for the loss of that Pass will endanger the whole of Yizhou. Why do you give this task to a couple of old generals?"

Zhuge Liang replied, "You think them too old to succeed, but I'm sure the attainment of Hanzhong depends upon these two."

Dubious, Zhao Yun and the others sniggered as they withdrew from the hall.

In due course, the veteran general and his comrade arrived at Jiameng Pass. At the sight of them, the two officers at the pass laughed in their hearts, thinking that in sending such a pair of old men on such a crucial mission Zhuge Liang had slipped in his calculations.

Huang Zhong said to his colleague: “You see the behavior of these people? They’re laughing at us because we’re old. Now we’ll do a wonderful service to convince them all.”

“At your orders, General,” replied Yan Yan.

The two veterans decided on their plan after a careful discussion. Huang Zhong led his men out of the pass to meet Zhang He. Both drew up in battle array. When Zhang He rode out and saw his aged opponent, he laughed in his face.

“Old man, are you not ashamed to go into battle at your age?” sneered Zhang He.

“You brat!” replied the veteran. “Do you despise me for my age? You will find my good sword young enough.”

So he urged his steed forward and rode at Zhang He. The two chargers met and a score of bouts were fought. Suddenly a great shouting came from the rear of Zhang He’s troops for Yan Yan, by way of a back road, had come up to raid him from behind. Attacked from both the front and the rear, Zhang He was utterly defeated. The pursuit did not cease with nightfall, and Zhang He was driven back nearly a hundred li. Contented with this success, the two old generals returned to the pass. For a time neither side stirred.

When Cao Hong heard of Zhang He’s defeat, he wanted again to exact the death penalty. But again Guo Huai dissuaded him. “If he is pressed too hard he may surrender to Liu Bei. Better send him some reinforcements. You will thus keep a hold on him and prevent his desertion.”

Therefore two officers were sent to help Zhang He with reinforcements. One of the two was Xiahou Shang, nephew of Xiahou Dun, and the other, Han Hao, was brother of Han Xuan, former prefect of Changsha and master of Huang Zhong. They took with them 5,000 soldiers.

The two officers soon reached Zhang He's camp, where they questioned him about the battle.

"That old general Huang Zhong is really valiant," said Zhang He, "and with Yan Yan's help he is quite formidable. We must be careful."

"When I was with my brother I knew the old rascal was very fierce. He and Wei Yan killed my brother and yielded their city to Liu Bei. Now that he is here I must have my revenge," said Han Hao.

So he and Xiahou Shang led out the newly arrived force.

Now, the two venerable generals had been doing a great deal of reconnoitering and had gained a thorough knowledge of the country. Yan Yan said, "Near here is a mountain named 'Tiandang' where Cao Cao has stored his supplies. If we can gain possession of that place we'll deprive the enemy of their grain and forage and so we'll get the whole region of Hanzhong."

Huang Zhong agreed entirely with his colleague, to whom he then related a secret scheme to accomplish their great design. Yan Yan, following the instruction, marched off with a body of men to carry out his part in the stratagem.

At news of the arrival of a new enemy force, Huang Zhong rode out to meet them. Han Hao, riding in front, began to abuse the veteran as a disgraceful old ruffian. Then he whipped up his steed and set his spear at Huang Zhong. Xiahou Shang also rode out to join the combat. They fought about a dozen bouts, before Huang Zhong fled.

They pursued him for twenty li and seized his camp. Huang Zhong, however, hastily threw up another camp. The next day they renewed the pursuit, which ended with the capture of the hastily constructed camp. By then they had advanced another twenty li. They called upon Zhang He to protect the second camp. Zhang He, suspecting guile in this unusual behavior from his opponent, tried to dissuade his colleagues from continuing the pursuit.

"Huang Zhong has retreated before you for two days—there is bound to be some trick behind this," warned Zhang He.

Xiahou Shang scoffed at him. "You're such a coward! No wonder you've been beaten so many times. Now say no more, but let us accomplish something great."

Zhang He, much mortified and shamed, left. The next day the two officers again went out to battle, and again the flee-and-chase game repeated itself. At the end of the day Huang Zhong had retreated still another twenty li. On the following day, Huang Zhong fled at the sight of his enemies without putting up much of a fight, except at short intervals. Thus he retreated back to Jiameng Pass, where he maintained a firm defense. The pursuers knocked at the very gate of the pass and made a camp close by.

Meanwhile, Meng Da secretly wrote to Liu Bei, telling him that Huang Zhong had been repeatedly defeated and now was inside the pass, afraid to venture out. Liu Bei became alarmed and consulted Zhuge Liang, who said, "That is his stratagem to make the enemy feel bloated with conceit so as to destroy them ultimately."

But none of the officers, Zhao Yun in particular, shared this opinion. Liu Bei decided to send his adopted son Liu Feng to reinforce his aged general. The young man came to the pass and saw Huang Zhong, who asked him bluntly why he had come to help.

"My father heard that you've suffered several defeats, and so he's sent me," said Liu Feng.

"But I'm only employing the ruse of leading on the enemy," said Huang Zhong, smiling. "You'll see tonight that in one battle I'll regain all the camps and capture their supplies and many horses. I've only lent the camps to them to store their supplies." Then he told Huo Jun to guard the pass and Meng Da to gather up the spoils that night, while Liu Feng was to witness how he was going to destroy the enemy.

At the second watch, Huang Zhong left the pass with 5,000 men. Now Xiahou Shang and Han Hao, seeing no movement from the pass for many days, had slackened their vigilance, and so were utterly unprepared for the raid. Their men had no time to don their armor or to saddle their horses. All the two leaders could do was to flee for their own lives, while their men trampled each other down in their haste to escape and were killed in great numbers. All three camps were recovered by dawn, and in them were found all sorts of military

equipment, horses, and saddles. The booty was carried off by Meng Da and stored in the pass.

Huang Zhong urged his men to pursue the enemy. Liu Feng tried to dissuade him, saying that the men needed to regather their strength.

“Can you seize the tiger’s cubs without entering the tiger’s lair?” cried Huang Zhong. And he spurred on in front.

Encouraged by their leader, the soldiers also exerted themselves. Zhang He’s army was thrown into confusion by the fleeing men, and he could not hold his position, but was also forced to retreat to the banks of the Han River, abandoning all the stockades.

Then Zhang He sought out the two officers who had brought about the misfortune and said to them: “This is Mount Tiandang, where our stores are. Close by is Mount Micang, which is also a depot for our grain. These two places are the very source of life for our army in the whole Hanzhong region. Any mishap to them means the loss of Hanzhong. We must see to their security.”

Xiahou Shang said, “My uncle, Xiahou Yuan, is defending the granaries at Mount Micang, which is linked to another range of hills called Mount Dingjun. There is nothing to worry about. My brother, Xiahou De, is guarding Mount Tiandang. Let’s go there and help him to protect that.”

Zhang He and the two officers set out at once. When they reached the mountain they told Xiahou De all that had happened.

“I have 100,000 men in camp here,” he replied. “You can take a troop and recover your lost camps.”

Zhang He objected, “The only proper course is to maintain a firm defense.”

Almost as they spoke the rolling of drums and the clang of gongs were heard, and sentinels came to report that Huang Zhong had approached.

“The old ruffian doesn’t know much of the art of war, after all,” said Xiahou De with a laugh. “He relies only on mere boldness.”

“Don’t underestimate him—he is crafty and not only bold,” said Zhang He.

“But his move is against the rules of war and not at all clever. Firstly, he’s come from a long way and his men are fatigued after the arduous march. Secondly, he’s penetrated deep inside an enemy’s country. I call these acts sheer neglect of military strategy!”

“Nevertheless, there is no harm in being more careful,” insisted Zhang He. “You’ll still do well to be on the defensive.”

“Give me 3,000 good soldiers and I’ll cut him to pieces,” cried Han Hao.

His request was granted and with the 3,000 men, Han Hao went down to meet his foe. As he approached, Huang Zhong deployed his men for battle. Liu Feng again added a note of

warning, protesting that it was late in the day to fight and the men were weary.

Huang Zhong laughed. “I don’t think so. This is a Heaven-sent opportunity to win great success, and it’ll be a violation of Heaven’s wish not to take it.”

So saying, he advanced amid thundering rolls of drums. Han Hao came forward with his men and the aged officer went toward him, whirling his sword. In the first encounter Han Hao fell. At this the men of Shu gave a loud yell and charged up the hill, at which Zhang He and Xiahou Shang quickly moved out to withstand them. But a great red glare sprang into the sky from behind the hill, accompanied by a deafening shouting. Hastily Xiahou De turned his men to deal with the new danger and ran straight into Yan Yan; the latter’s arm rose, and sword fell—then Xiahou De dropped from his steed to rise no more.

This ambush had been carefully prepared by Huang Zhong, who had instructed his comrade and sent him there beforehand. Therefore as soon as he saw Huang Zhong come up with his army, Yan Yan raised a fire and the flames had reached up to the sky, illuminating the hills and valleys.

Yan Yan, after slaying Xiahou De, came round the hill to aid in the attack, so that Zhang He and Xiahou Shang were assaulted from both the front and rear. Finding the situation desperate, they abandoned their position and rushed toward Mount Dingjun to seek refuge with Xiahou Yuan.

Meanwhile, the two old generals consolidated the position they had won and sent the good news of victory to Chengdu.

Liu Bei, exhilarated by the happy tiding, called together all his officers to celebrate.

Fa Zheng said, “Not long ago Cao Cao, after subduing Zhang Lu and thereby getting possession of Hanzhong, did not follow it up with an operation to seize all of Shu, but left two officers to guard it while he himself returned to the north. That was a mistake. Now, my lord, do not make a similar mistake yourself. Take advantage of the present favorable situation, with Zhang He newly defeated and Tiandang captured, to personally lead an army to attack Hanzhong, and you will seize it at once. Once that region is secured, you can proceed to train your army and amass supplies so that when opportunities arise you can advance to strike Cao Cao or retreat to defend yourself. This is a Heaven-sent chance and you should not let it pass.”

Both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang saw the wisdom of his words and prepared to act accordingly. Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei were to lead the van, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were to command a mighty army of 100,000 men. A day was chosen for the expedition and orders were sent to alert officers at every position to keep careful guard.

It was on an auspicious day in the seventh month of the twenty-third year of the period Jian An (A.D. 218) that the army departed. At Jiameng Pass, Huang Zhong and Yan Yan were summoned and well rewarded for their remarkable services.

Liu Bei said to Huang Zhong, “Everybody said you were old, General, but our Chief Military Counselor knows you better, and you have indeed rendered a most amazing service. Still,

there is Mount Dingjun yet to be seized. It is the enemy's central depot of supplies and protects Nanzheng. If we could get that mountain we would have cleared our way to the whole area around Yangping Pass. Do you think you are equal to this task?"

To this question the veteran nobly answered in the affirmative and made ready to start.

Zhuge Liang intervened hastily, "You're brave enough, General, but Xiahou Yuan is quite different from Zhang He. He's a real strategist, well versed in the art of war; so much so that Cao Cao relies upon him as his pillar in the west. He was the one who held Chang'an against Ma Chao and now he is again the person to maintain Hanzhong. Cao Cao entrusts him with these tasks, for he believes Xiahou Yuan has the makings of a great commander. You have overcome Zhang He, but it does not follow that you will conquer this man. I think I must send someone down to Jingzhou to relieve Guan Yu for this task. He will be the right match for Xiahou Yuan."

Huang Zhong hotly replied, "In the old days General Lian Po,* at the age of eighty, still ate one dou of rice and ten catties of meat every day. His strength and valor frightened the neighboring lords, who dared not encroach upon the borders of his country. Now I'm not yet seventy and you call me old! I'll go with my own 3,000 men, without any help and I'll lay Xiahou Yuan's head at your feet."

Zhuge Liang refused to allow him to go, but Huang Zhong insisted. At last Zhuge Liang conceded, on the condition that an advisor was to accompany him on the expedition.

To excite is more effective than to request;

An aged general may prove better than a younger man.

The name of the advisor will be disclosed in the next chapter.

Footnote

* A notable general of the Kingdom of Zhao during the period of Warring States, a colleague of Lin Xiangru (see Chapter Sixty-Six).

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

Huang Zhong Scores a Victory with the Capture of Dui Hill

Zhao Yun Conquers a Host on the Han Waters

"If you're really determined to undertake this expedition, I'll let Fa Zheng go with you," said Zhuge Liang to the veteran general. "You can discuss everything with him. I'll also send reinforcements to support you."

Huang Zhong agreed and soon the troop set out.

Zhuge Liang explained to Liu Bei that he had purposely tried to spur on the old general so that he would really exert himself, or else he would most likely fail. After this, Zhuge Liang began to prepare fully for this great operation. He first sent Zhao Yun on the same mission. He was to offer help to the old general by staging a surprise attack from some byroad. However, if the aged general was victorious, he was to do nothing; but if he was in difficulties then he was to go to his rescue at once. Next, he ordered Liu Feng and Meng Da to march out with 3,000 men. They were to take positions at strategic points on Mount Dingjun and set up a great many banners to create an impression of a huge force, and so frighten and perplex the enemy. Then he sent a messenger to Xiabian to tell Ma Chao what part he was to play in the campaign. Lastly, he ordered Yan Yan to hold Lang-zhong in

the absence of Zhang Fei and Wei Yan, who would be joining the great expedition to Hanzhong.

The two fugitives, Zhang He and Xiahou Shang, reached Xiahou Yuan's camp and told their sad tale of the loss of the Tiandang Mountain, the death of their two comrades, and the threatened attack on Hanzhong by Liu Bei. The alarming news was sent to Cao Hong, who bore it quickly to the capital.

Cao Cao lost no time in calling a council. Liu Ye, who had formerly advised Cao Cao to seize the whole of Shu, said: "The loss of Hanzhong would shake the whole country. Your Highness must not shrink from toil and hardship, but must lead the army yourself."

"How I regret I did not heed your words before, sir," said Cao Cao. "It is my fault that things have taken such a turn."

He hastily issued an order to raise an army of 400,000 men, which he would lead. The army was ready in the seventh month, in early fall, and marched out in three divisions. Cao Cao commanded the central force, while Xiahou Dun and Cao Xiu led the advance and rear guards.

Cao Cao rode a white horse, beautifully caparisoned, and clad in embroidered silk. The guards carried a huge, red umbrella woven of silk and gold threads. Beside him in two lines were the symbols of princely dignity: the golden melons, silver axes, stirrups, clubs, spears, and lances; banners embroidered with the sun and moon, dragon and phoenix, were borne aloft. His escort of 25,000 Dragon and Tiger guards marched in five columns of 5,000 each, under banners of the five colors: blue,

yellow, red, white, and black. These made a splendid sight as they marched, each column under its own flag, with men in armor and horses in caparisons all of one color, glittering in the sun.

As they moved out of Tong Pass and into the open space, Cao Cao noticed in the distance a thick wood, overgrown with luxuriant trees, and asked his attendants what the place was called.

"This place is called Lantian," they replied. "And in that thicket is the estate of the late Cai Yong. Now his daughter, Cai Yan,* and her husband, Dong Si, live there."

Now Cao Cao and Cai Yong had been excellent friends at one time. His daughter had been first married to Wei Zhong-dao. Then she was abducted and taken away to the far north, where she had borne two sons. In her exile she had composed a ballad, called Eighteen Stanzas for the Mongol Flageolet, which later became widely known in central China. Cao Cao, after reading the ballad, had been moved by pity for her sorrows and sent an envoy with a thousand taels of gold to ransom her. The ruler of the northern kingdom, overawed by Cao Cao's strength, had returned her to her homeland. Then Cao Cao married her to Dong Si.

Ordering his escort to march on, Cao Cao went up to the house with about a hundred attendants, where they dismounted and inquired after the lady of the house. At this time Dong Si was away at his official post and only the lady was at home. As soon as she heard who her visitor was she hastened to welcome him into the reception room. When he was seated and she had paid her proper respects, she stood

deferentially at his side. Glancing round the room, Cao Cao saw a rubbing of a tablet hanging on the wall. So he got up to look and asked his hostess about it.

"It is a tablet of Cao E. In the time of Emperor He (circ. A.D. 100), in Shangyu, there was a certain magician named Cao Xu, who could dance and sing like the very spirit of music. On the fifth of the fifth month* of a certain year he was dancing in a boat, and being quite intoxicated, fell overboard and drowned. His daughter, Cao E, then fourteen years old, was greatly distressed and wept by the river bank for seven days and nights. Then she threw herself into the waves, and five days later she floated to the surface with her father's body in her arms. The villagers buried them on the bank, and the magistrate reported the whole thing to the Emperor as a worthy instance of daughterly affection and remarkable piety. Afterwards, the magistrate asked Handan Chun to record the event in writing and had the essay inscribed. At that time Handan Chun was only thirteen, but the composition was so perfect that no rewriting was necessary. The stele was set up beside the grave, and both the inscription and the story were admired by the people of the time. When my father heard about it he went to see it. As it was evening, he could not see the words but in the gloom he felt out the inscription with his fingers. Then he asked for a writing brush and wrote eight large characters on the reverse of the stone tablet and, later, when people recut the stone, they engraved these eight words as well.

Cao Cao then read the eight words, which literally read: "Yellow silk, young lady, a daughter's child, pestle and mortar."

“Can you explain?” asked Cao Cao of his hostess.

“No, I cannot. Although it is a writing of my father’s, I do not really understand it,” she replied.

Turning to the strategists in his staff, Cao Cao asked, “Can any of you explain it?”

At first none of them could come up with an interpretation. Then a man stood out and said he had fathomed its meaning. He was Yang Xiu.

“Do not tell me yet,” said Cao Cao. “Let me think it out.”

Soon after, they took leave of the lady and resumed their journey. About three li from the farm the meaning of the eight words suddenly dawned upon Cao Cao, and he, smiling, turned to Yang Xiu, saying, “Now, you may tell me.”

“These eight words form a riddle,” said Yang Xiu. “In ‘Yellow silk’, yellow stands for ‘color,’ and the two characters for ‘silk’ and ‘color’ together form a word meaning ‘decidedly.’ In ‘young lady,’ the word ‘young’ with the word ‘lady’ beside it forms another word, meaning ‘fine.’ Similarly, the combination of ‘daughter’ and ‘child’ makes the word ‘well.’ And lastly, ‘pestle and mortar’ suggest pounding together the five bitter herbs in a receptacle: the characters for ‘receptacle’ and ‘bitter’ form a word meaning ‘to tell.’ So the solution of the riddle is, ‘Decidedly fine and well told.’”

Cao Cao was astonished at his cleverness, and said, “That’s just what I make of it.”

All those present greatly admired Yang Xiu's knowledge and quick wit.

Soon they reached Nanzheng, where Cao Hong welcomed them. He told Cao Cao about Zhang He's defeats by the enemy.

"That is not his fault," said Cao Cao, "Defeats and victories are but common in war."

"Liu Bei has sent Huang Zhong to attack Mount Dingjun," said Cao Hong. "Xiahou Yuan, hearing of your coming, has been defending the position and not going out to give battle."

"But to be on the defensive is to show cowardice," objected Cao Cao.

Therefore he sent a messenger with a jie* to the mountain commander ordering him to attack the enemy.

"Xiahou Yuan is sometimes too unyielding, and he should be warned against possible enemy ruses," said Liu Ye.

Cao Cao then sent a letter to accompany the jie. And when the messenger arrived at Xiahou Yuan's camp the letter was opened. It read:

> Every leader must exercise a combination of firmness and yielding, but not rely on boldness alone. A bold fighter is good only in dealing with one enemy. Now I am camped at Nanzheng ready to watch your "ingenious talents," and all I require of you is, "Do not fail my expectations."

The letter pleased the commander very much. Having sent away the messenger he called in Zhang He for consultation.

"The prince has a great army at Nanzheng ready to destroy Liu Bei. We've been on the defense here long enough, and it's time we rendered some substantial service. Tomorrow I'm going out to battle, and I must capture Huang Zhong alive."

"Huang Zhong is both resourceful and brave," said Zhang He. "Besides, he has Fa Zheng to advise him and you really must be cautious. The hills here are difficult and dangerous, suitable for firm defense."

"How will we be able to look our prince in the face when other people have rendered good services? You may hold the hill, and I'll go out to battle."

Then he turned to his men and asked, "Who'll go out to reconnoiter and incite a battle?" His nephew Xiahou Shang volunteered.

His uncle said to him, "When you go out to fight Huang Zhong I want you to lose and not to win. I have a very good plan ready for the enemy." He then explained his plan to Xiahou Shang, who took the instruction and went away with 3,000 men.

Now Huang Zhong and his comrade, Fa Zheng, were camped in a valley of Mount Dingjun. They had been endeavoring to entice Xiahou Yuan out into the field to fight, but so far had not been successful. They would have liked to attack him but, apprehensive of the precipitous mountain roads, dared not do so. So they had not advanced. That day, when scouts came to

report that Cao Cao's men had come down from the hill to offer battle, Huang Zhong was ready to march out to meet them at once. But a minor officer named Chen Shi offered himself.

"Do not trouble yourself, General," said Chen Shi. "Let me go out to fight them."

Delighted with the offer, Huang Zhong consented, and placed one thousand men under Chen Shi, who went out of the valley and deployed his army. Presently Xiahou Shang came up and, as arranged, merely fought a few bouts and ran away. Chen Shi followed but was soon brought to a standstill by the falling of logs and stones from the hills on both sides. As he hastened to turn back, Xiahou Yuan suddenly emerged from behind and attacked. Chen Shi had no chance against them and was quickly made prisoner. Many of his men surrendered to the enemy, but a few escaped to their own camp and told Huang Zhong of the defeat.

Huang Zhong at once consulted Fa Zheng, who said, "This Xiahou Yuan is easily provoked to anger, and he relies more on his boldness than discretion. Our plan now is to first raise the fighting spirit of our men, then break camp and advance stage by stage, entrenching ourselves at every step. In this way we'll provoke our enemy to battle, when we can capture him. This tactic is known as 'Turning the guest into the host.'"

Huang Zhong took his advice. He distributed all the things in the camp among his men, whose rejoicing filled the whole valley. They vowed to fight to death in battle. Then camp was broken, and the army marched forward a certain distance.

Then they made a temporary camp, where they stayed for a few days for rest. The maneuver was repeated.

When tidings of the enemy's advance reached Xiahou Yuan, he proposed to go out and fight. "This is a well-known ruse called 'Turning the guest into the host'," said Zhang He. "And you should remain on the defensive. You'll lose if you fight."

Xiahou Yuan was not the man to tolerate cautious advice, so he sent out Xiahou Shang to give battle. As soon as this force reached Huang Zhong's camp, he mounted and rode out to fight. In the very first bout he captured Xiahou Shang. Those who escaped told the news to their commander, and Xiahou Yuan at once proposed an exchange of prisoners. This was agreed to, and the exchange was to be effected the following day in front of both armies.

So the next day both sides were arrayed in a spot where the valley widened, the two leaders on horseback beneath their respective standards. Beside each stood his prisoner. Both captives wore thin clothes to cover their bodies, without robes or armor. At the first beat of the drum each started to run back to his own side. But just as Xiahou Shang reached the ranks of his own side, Huang Zhong shot an arrow and wounded him in the back. The victim managed to return to his side, still carrying the arrow in his back.

Xiahou Yuan, mad with rage, could contain himself no longer. He galloped straight at Huang Zhong to engage him, which was exactly what the latter wanted to provoke him into doing. The fight went on for a score of bouts, when suddenly gongs clanged out from Xiahou Yuan's side and he hastily

drew off, losing some men while doing so. When he reached his own side he asked why the gong had sounded.

“Because we saw the banners of Shu on several parts of the hill and we were afraid there might be an ambush.”

Believing this must be the case, Xiahou Yuan decided to maintain a strict defense. Before long, Huang Zhong had got to the foot of the mountain, and he again asked his comrade for advice.

Fa Zheng, pointing to the hills around, said, “There is a steep hill to the west of this one, difficult to access, but from its summit one has a complete view of the defenses of the enemy. If you can take that eminence, Mount Dingjun lies in the palm of your hand.”

Huang Zhong looked up and saw that the top of the unknown hill was a small plateau and it was guarded by just a few men. So that evening at the second watch he led his men to dash up the hill, drove out the small force there, and captured their camp. It was just opposite Mount Dingjun.

Fa Zheng said, “General, you take up a position halfway up the hill, and I’ll go to the top. When the enemy appears I’ll show a white flag. But don’t rush into battle. Wait quietly till the enemy becomes dull with inaction, and at that point I’ll hoist a red flag. That’ll be the signal for attack.”

Pleased, Huang Zhong prepared this plan. In the meantime, the men who had been driven from the hilltop had reported the loss to Xiahou Yuan.

“With Huang Zhong occupying that hill, I simply must give battle,” he said in wrath.

Zhang He was strongly opposed to this, saying the whole thing was a ruse of Fa Zheng’s, but Xiahou Yuan was obstinate.

“From the top of that hill the whole of our position is visible, our strengths as well as our weaknesses. How can I not fight?”

In vain did Zhang He try to dissuade him. Xiahou Yuan set out his men to surround the hill and then began to vent his rage at his enemy in an attempt to incite him to give battle.

At the top of the hill Fa Zheng hoisted the white flag and Xiahou Yuan was allowed to fume and rage in vain. He tried every form of insult, but Huang Zhong ignored them all. In the afternoon the men became weary and dispirited, obviously losing their eagerness to fight. Seeing this, Fa Zheng unfurled the red flag.

Instantly drums rolled, horns blew, and men shouted till the earth seemed to shake as the hoary warrior rode out ahead of his men, down the hill with the momentum of a landslide. Xiahou Yuan, caught unawares, was totally unprepared for this sudden onslaught. Before he could defend himself Huang Zhong had rushed to his standard, and with a thundering roar, raised his sword and cleft Xiahou Yuan through the head and shoulders so that he fell in two pieces.

A poem was written to praise the veteran general:

Hoary headed is he, but he goes out to battle;

Gray haired, yet fearlessly mighty;

With his strong arms he bends the bow,
The arrows fly.

With the swiftness of the wind he rides,
The white sword gleams.

The sound of his voice is as the roar of a tiger,
His steed is swift as a dragon in flight.
Victory is his and its rich rewards,
For he extends the domain of his lord.

At the death of their commander, the soldiers fled for their lives. On the back of this victory Huang Zhong went on to capture Mount Dingjun. Zhang He came out to oppose him, but, attacked at two points by Huang Zhong and Chen Shi, he lost the day and fled. However, before he had gone far, another force blazed out from the hillside and barred his way. Their leader cried: “This is Zhao Zi-long (Zhao Yun) of Changshan!”

Terrified, Zhang He led his men to flee back to Mount Dingjun. But on the way he met a body of his own men, who told him that the hill had fallen into the hands of Liu Feng and Meng Da. This was another severe blow to Zhang He. With nowhere else to turn he escaped to the Han River, where a temporary camp was pitched and the terrible tidings were dispatched to Cao Cao.

At the news of the death of his favorite general, Cao Cao burst into loud wailing. And then he remembered the four lines the soothsayer, Guan Lu, had said and began to see their hidden meaning. The first line, Three-eight crosswise, meant that the time was the twenty-fourth year of the period Jian An; the second line, The yellow boar meets the tiger, narrowed the time further down to the first month of the year of the pig; the third line, South of Dingjun, referred to the south of Mount Dingjun; and the last line, Loss of one limb, indicated the brotherly relationship between Xiahou Yuan and himself.

Cao Cao sent people to inquire the whereabouts of Guan Lu, but he was nowhere to be found.

Cao Cao hated Huang Zhong intensely, and so he himself led his army toward Mount Dingjun to avenge the death of his cousin Xiahou Yuan. Xu Huang led the van. The army presently reached the Han River, where it was joined by Zhang He and his men.

Zhang He said to Cao Cao, “Now that this position is lost we must move the supplies in the Micang Mountain to the north before advancing farther.” Cao Cao agreed and Zhang He was ordered to remove the grain to the safer place.

Huang Zhong cut off the head of Xiahou Yuan and took it to Liu Bei to claim his victory. For his service he was rewarded with the title General-Conqueror of the West, and banquets were given in his honor.

Soon, however, an officer named Zhang Zhu brought the news of Cao Cao's vindictive expedition and the removal of his supplies to the north by Zhang He.

Zhuge Liang said, "Cao Cao is here with a large army. He will probably be short of supplies. If some of you can penetrate deep into his territory and burn his stores and seize his baggage, he will have but little spirit left to fight."

"I will undertake the task," volunteered Huang Zhong again.

Zhuge Liang tried to dissuade him. "Remember Cao Cao is a different sort of opponent from your latest victim."

Liu Bei said, "After all, Xiahou Yuan was but a bold fighting man. He was no match for Zhang He. It will be ten times better to kill Zhang He."

"I will go and kill him," cried the aged warrior excitedly, his spirit roused.

"Then go with Zi-long," said Zhuge Liang. "Combine forces and see who can succeed."

Huang Zhong agreed to this condition. Zhang Zhu was also sent as his second.

On the way, Zhao Yun asked him what plan he had in mind to deal with Cao Cao's army of 200,000 in their ten camps, and how the stores of grain and forage were to be seized.

"Let me go first, then," said Huang Zhong.

"No, wait—I'm going first," said Zhao Yun.

"But I'm the senior leader—you're only my second," said Huang Zhong.

"Well, you and I are both anxious to render a good service to our lord. We're not rivals. Let's cast lots to decide who's to lead the way."

This was agreed to, and the lot fell to the aged general.

"Since you're to make the first attempt, you must let me help you," said Zhao Yun. "Now let's decide upon a fixed time, and if you've returned by that time, I'll not stir. But if by that time you haven't come back then I'll come to aid you."

"That suits me admirably," said Huang Zhong.

So they set noon as the time. Zhao Yun went back to his own camp, where he called in his next in command and said, "General Huang is going to try to burn Cao Cao's supplies tomorrow. If he hasn't returned at noon I'm to go to his aid. Our camp faces the Han River and the ground here is dangerous enough, suitable for defense. If I go, you must guard it very carefully and do not venture out."

Huang Zhong also went back to his camp and said to his senior captain, Zhang Zhu: "As I've slain Xiahou Yuan, Zhang He is surely scared. I'm going to destroy the enemy's store of grain tomorrow, taking with me most of the men. You're to come and assist me. Tell the men to have a good meal at the third watch, and be ready to move out at the fourth

watch. We'll go straight to the foot of the northern hills, capture Zhang He first, and then get their supplies."

Zhang Zhu took the order and arranged everything. That night they set out, with Huang Zhong leading the way and Zhang Zhu following in the rear, and stole across the Han River to the foot of the hills. As the sun rose in the east, they saw before them mountains of grain and only a few men on watch. These fled at the first sight of the men of Shu. Huang Zhong ordered his cavalrymen to collect brushwood and pile it on the grain. Just as they were starting the fire, there appeared a force led by Zhang He, who at once began a fight with Huang Zhong. Soon Cao Cao heard of the raid and sent Xu Huang to help. He came up from the rear, and Huang Zhong was surrounded. Zhang Zhu, with a small company, managed to get away, but before he could escape to camp he was intercepted by Wen Ping in front, and by more of Cao Cao's men in the rear, so that he was also surrounded. Both were in grave danger.

Meanwhile, time was quickly ticking away. When noon came with no sign of Huang Zhong, Zhao Yun hurriedly girded on his armor, took 3,000 soldiers with him and rushed to his aid. Just as he was leaving he again warned his comrade Zhang Yi to keep a good watch.

"Guard the camp most carefully—see that you have a lot of archers and crossbowmen on both sides."

Zhang Yi obeyed. Zhao Yun rushed off, spear in hand, to the scene of the battle. Soon he encountered one of Wen Ping's men, whom he easily disposed of. The next man to block his

way was an officer called Jiao Bing, to whom Zhao Yun asked, “Where are the soldiers of Shu?”

“All killed,” cried Jiao Bing.

In a rage, Zhao Yun dashed forward, slew Jiao Bing with one thrust of his spear, and drove away his soldiers. Then he went on to the foot of the northern hills, where he found Huang Zhong surrounded. With a yell he dashed into the encircling forces, thrusting this way and shoving that, forcing everyone to shrink and recoil before him. He swung his mighty spear so swiftly that its gleaming light resembled blossoms of a pear tree dancing around his body. Zhang He and Xu Huang, panic-stricken, dared not stand in his way, and thus Zhao Yun fought his way through and rescued the old general. Then they fought their way out and none could even dream of coming near the heroic Zhao Yun.

Cao Cao had been watching the course of the fighting from an elevation. Shocked to see such a fearless warrior plunging his way into the very heart of the battle and forcing all to retreat before him, he asked his officers if they knew the identity of the hero.

“That is Zhao Yun of Changshan,” replied one who knew him.

“So his heroism at the Long Slope endures,” said Cao Cao.

He gave an express order to all his men to take extra caution wherever they met Zhao Yun.

After rescuing his comrade and breaking through the encirclement, Zhao Yun was told that another of his comrades, Zhang Zhu, was trapped on a hill in the southeast. So he did not return to the camp but went to his relief. He had little need to fight, for his bravery at the Long Slope in Dangyang was widely known among his opponents, who no sooner saw the name emblazoned on his banners than they fled without more ado.

But it filled Cao Cao with rage to see his men falling away before Zhao Yun, who rode on invincibly, rescuing both his comrades. Taking his officers, Cao Cao himself went in pursuit.

Zhao Yun had already reached his own camp, where he was met by Zhang Yi. But a cloud of dust was seen in the distance, and they knew they were about to be attacked.

“Let’s bar the gates and go up to the tower to defend the camp,” said Zhang Yi.

“Don’t bar the gates,” shouted Zhao Yun. “When I had but one horse and one spear at Dangyang, I looked upon Cao Cao’s many legions as mere dirt. Now that I have an army at my back and officers to help, what is there to fear?”

Then he deployed the archers and the bowmen in the trench outside, while inside he ordered his men to throw all the weapons and flags face downwards and muffle the sound of the drums. Then all alone, with only his steed and spear, Zhao Yun stood outside the gate of the camp.

It was dusk when Zhang He and Xu Huang approached the camp. They saw no ensigns fluttering, and heard no drums beating at their approach. All they saw was the lone figure of Zhao Yun at the gate. Filled with suspicion, they halted and dared advance no farther. While they hesitated, Cao Cao arrived and urged his army to move forward. They answered with a loud shout and dashed forward, but seeing the one figure standing motionless at the gate, they turned back again.

Then raising his spear, Zhao Yun beckoned to his men to act, and all of a sudden the archers and bowmen in the trenches began to fire. In the dim light of the dusk, it was impossible for Cao Cao's men to know how many their enemies were, but terror seized upon them and they ran for their lives, with their lord to the foremost. And as they ran the drums rolled and the men of Shu shouted and pursued, till the flight became a sheer rout and a confused mass of men reached the banks of the Han River. The chase continuing, many were forced into the river and were drowned.

Zhao Yun and two of his comrades, each with one force, followed close on the heels of the routed army. As Cao Cao was making off with all speed, two other officers of Shu came along and set fire to his stores of food and forage. Compelled to abandon the northern hill stores Cao Cao set out hastily for Nanzheng. Zhang He and Xu Huang could not make a stand, and they also abandoned their camps, which Zhao Yun at once occupied. Beside the stores of food, the victors collected countless pieces of weaponry along the banks of the river. It was a tremendous victory indeed!

The good news was sent to Liu Bei, who came with Zhuge Liang to the scene of the victory, and there they heard the full

story of Zhao Yun's prowess. Liu Bei was so pleased that, after viewing the steep and rugged hills all around, he turned to Zhuge Liang and said, "Truly, Zi-long is bravery personified, from head to foot!"

Behold Zhao Yun, the warrior of Changshan,

Whose whole body is valor;

Once he fought at the Long Slope,
And his courage today is no less.

He rushes into the press

His heroism is the best.

Surrounded by his enemies,
He is dauntless and daring.

Devils howl and spirits cry,
The sky is cowed and the earth trembles.
Such is Zhao Yun, the brave,
Whose whole body is valor.

For his services Zhao Yun was awarded the title of General—Fierce Tiger. And there was banqueting late into the night to reward both the officers and men.

Soon reports came that Cao Cao was coming again through the Sloping Valley to try to re-capture the Han River. But Liu Bei laughed, saying, "He will not succeed. I think we will gain command of the river."

Then he led his army west of the river to oppose him. Cao Cao sent out Xu Huang to lead the van and open the battle. A certain man called Wang Ping, who said he knew the country well, offered to accompany the leader, and he was sent as second in command.

Cao Cao camped to the north of Mount Dingjun while his advance guard started for the Han River. When they reached the bank, Xu Huang gave orders for the soldiers to cross to the other side.

"To cross the river is fine," said his second, "but what if you have to retreat?"

"Of old, Han Xin* also arrayed his force with his back to the river," argued Xu Huang. "That is the tactic known as 'Out of the place of death comes life.'"

"You are mistaken, General, for the examples are not the same. When Han Xin took that step he knew how unresourceful his opponents were. Now do you have any idea of the plans of your opponents, Zhao Yun and Huang Zhong?"

"You may lead the foot soldiers to hold the enemy while I destroy them with the cavalry."

Then bridges were built and the army crossed to fight the men of Shu.

Blindly Xu Huang imitated Han Xin,

Unaware his foe was another Zhang Liang.†

Who would win the victory will be revealed in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* Poetess at the end of the Han Dynasty and daughter of Cai Yong (A.D. 132–192). She was abducted from her home and lived among the Huns for twelve years. The modern poet Guo Mo-ruo has written a play based on her life and her friendship with Cao Cao.

* The day of the Dragon Boat Festival.

* A tally issued by ancient rulers to their envoys as credentials.

* A famous general who helped Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty, to defeat his rival Xiang Yu.

† Chief advisor of Liu Bang, founder of the Han Dynasty.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

Zhuge Liang Conquers Hanzhong by Strategy

Cao Cao Withdraws His Army into Sloping Valley

In spite of his colleague's strong opposition, Xu Huang crossed the river and encamped. Huang Zhong and Zhao Yun both offered to combat the enemy, and Liu Bei gave his consent.

Huang Zhong said to his comrade on the way, "Xu Huang has come to exhibit his boldness. Let's not give him the satisfaction of fighting immediately but wait till evening, when his men are fatigued. Then we'll fall upon him from both sides."

Zhao Yun agreed, and each retired to a stockade. Xu Huang appeared and for many hours tried to draw them into a fight, but they refused to budge. Then Xu Huang ordered his archers and bowmen to come forward and shoot at the Shu camps.

At this Huang Zhong said, "He must be thinking of retreat or he would not tell his men to shoot. Now's the time to smite him."

His inference was quickly confirmed by scouts, who reported that the rearmost troops of the enemy had begun to withdraw. At once the drums of Shu rolled a deafening peal and the troops rushed out to attack on either side. Routed completely, the fleeing soldiers were driven back to the Han River, where many were drowned. But their leader escaped after a desperate fight, and when he got back to camp he blamed his comrade Wang Ping for not having gone to his aid.

"Had I done so, the camps would have been left unguarded," said Wang Ping. "I tried to dissuade you from going, but you would not listen to me, and you brought this defeat on yourself."

Xu Huang in his wrath desired to slay Wang Ping, who, enraged in his turn, decided to defect. That night Wang Ping led his men to start a fire in the camp, which caused great confusion among the men of Cao. Xu Huang had to abandon the camp, whereas Wang Ping crossed the river and surrendered to Zhao Yun, who took him to see Liu Bei. He told Liu Bei all about the topography of the Han River and the country nearby.

"I will surely capture Hanzhong now that you are here to help me," said Liu Bei joyfully to his new ally, and in reward he appointed Wang Ping as an assistant general and guide.

When Cao Cao found out about Wang Ping's defection from Xu Huang, he was infuriated. He placed himself at the head of a large force to retrieve the camps by the river bank. Zhao Yun, considering his isolated position, retreated to the west side of the river, and the two armies lay on opposite sides of the water. When he came down with his lord to view the

position, Zhuge Liang noticed in the upper course of the stream a hill that might well screen a thousand men, and a plan began to form in his mind.

After he returned to camp, he called in Zhao Yun and told him to place half that number, with drums and horns, in ambush behind the hill, to listen for explosions in the camp that would occur some time during the evening or night. Every time he heard a detonation he was only to give a long roll of the drums and not go forth to fight. So Zhao Yun departed to play his part in the drama, while Zhuge Liang went up a hill, from where he kept a secret watch over the enemy camp.

On the following day, Cao Cao's men approached and offered challenges, but not a man came out of the Shu camp, nor was an arrow or a bolt shot. They had to withdraw without fighting a battle. But in the depths of the night, Zhuge Liang, who saw from his elevated position all the lights in the enemy camp extinguished and all the men turning in to rest, exploded a bomb, and at once Zhao Yun's men beat their drums and blared their trumpets. Cao Cao's men awoke in alarm, thinking it was a night raid; but when they rushed out, there was no enemy in sight, and as the hubbub ceased they went back to sleep, only to be woken again by another explosion, another roll of drums and trumpets, accompanied by loud shouting that resounded throughout the valley and shook the very earth itself. Thus the night passed in constant alarms for the men of Cao. The same trick was repeated for three nights running and on the fourth day Cao Cao, too afraid to tolerate it any longer, broke up his camp and retreated thirty li to pitch in a wide, open space.

Zhuge Liang, pleased at the result of his ruse, said, smiling, "Cao Cao may be familiar with the strategies of war, but he is ignorant of deceitful tricks."

Then he asked Liu Bei to cross the river with his men and camp with the stream at their back. As this position would leave the army no way of retreat, Liu Bei was perplexed and asked his advisor what this meant. Zhuge Liang told him his plan, which will be revealed in the next part of the story.

This way of encampment also puzzled Cao Cao who, hoping to bring things to a head, sent a written challenge of war, to which Zhuge Liang replied that they would fight a decisive battle on the morrow.

The next day the two armies arrayed themselves halfway between the two camps in front of a mountain. Cao Cao presently rode out under his standard surrounded by his officers. On his two sides were aligned banners embroidered with a dragon and a phoenix. After three peals of drums, he summoned Liu Bei to a parley. Liu Bei rode out supported by his officers. Flourishing his whip, Cao Cao began to abuse his opponent.

"Liu Bei, you ungrateful and despicable rebel! How dare you betray the court?"

Liu Bei answered, "I am a member of the imperial family, and I hold an edict authorizing me to seize you. You have murdered the Empress, made yourself a prince, and arrogantly assume the use of an imperial chariot. Are you not an out-and-out rebel?"

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang to give battle, and Liu Feng went to meet him. As the combat began, Liu Bei left his position to move into the ranks of his army. Liu Feng proved to be no match for his opponent and presently fled. Cao Cao, determined to capture Liu Bei, issued an order, promising that whoever captured Liu Bei would be the ruler of the west country. Encouraged by this incentive his army uttered one great roar and surged forward. The men of Shu abandoned their camps and fled toward the river, even discarding their horses and their weapons, which littered the ground. The temptation was great and Cao Cao's men began eagerly picking these up for their own possession. Seeing this, Cao Cao hastily clanged the gongs to indicate withdrawal.

"Why did you call us off when we were on the point of capturing Liu Bei?"

"There are two things that puzzle me. First, why did our enemy encamp with the river to their back? Secondly, why did they abandon their steeds and weapons? We must withdraw at once and not pick up the discarded things on the ground. Whoever dares to collect these castaways will suffer the penalty of death. Now retreat as quickly as you can."

As Cao Cao turned about to retreat, Zhuge Liang hoisted the signal flag for the offensive, and the retreating soldiers were at once harassed on three sides by Liu Bei, Zhao Yun, and Huang Zhong. The chase was kept up throughout the day and well into the night—the men of Cao were in chaos. Cao Cao ordered his army to take refuge in Nanzheng.

Presently, however, they saw flames rising at five points before them, and soon it was known that their city of refuge

had fallen into the hands of Zhang Fei and Wei Yan. These two, who had been replaced by the aged general Yan Yan, had seized Nanzheng on their way to join Liu Bei. This was another serious blow to Cao Cao, who then turned toward Yangping Pass. Liu Bei followed them with his main army to Baozhou in the Nanzheng district, where the chase halted and Liu Bei set about pacifying the people and restoring peace.

"Cao Cao was very quickly overcome this time," said Liu Bei to his advisor, "how was that?"

"He has always been of a suspicious nature," said Zhuge Liang, "and that often leads to failure, although he is a good commander. I have defeated him by playing upon his doubts."

"He is rather weakened now," said Liu Bei. "What plan do you have to drive him out entirely?"

"That is all thought out."

So saying, the advisor sent Zhang Fei and Wei Yan on two different routes to intercept Cao Cao's supply wagons, and Huang Zhong and Zhao Yun to go and set fire to the hills. All four officers went away, taking with them locals to act as guides.

At Yangping Pass, Cao Cao dispatched scouts to do reconnoitering work, who returned to report that the roads far and near were blocked by the men of Shu and every hill was burning. However, they had not seen any enemy soldiers. Cao Cao was pondering with dismay over this information when another startling report came in that his supply wagons would be intercepted by Zhang Fei and Wei Yan. At this, he called

for a volunteer to counter Zhang Fei and Xu Chu offered himself. He was given a thousand veterans, and ordered to escort the grain wagons safely back to Yangping Pass.

The officer in charge of grain transport was very glad to see Xu Chu. “Except for you, General, the grain would never reach Yangping.”

He entertained Xu Chu with the wine and food on the wagons, who ate and drank copiously, so that he became quite intoxicated. And in that state he urged the convoy to proceed.

“The sun has set,” objected the transport officer, “and the road near Baozhou is difficult and dangerous. We should not pass there at night.”

“I can face any danger,” boasted the drunken captain. “I am brave as a myriad of men put together. Who do you think I fear! Besides, there is a good moon tonight, and it is light enough for us to push the wagons along.”

So Xu Chu took the lead, sword in hand. By the second watch they were advancing toward Baozhou. About halfway there rolling drums and blaring horns greeted them through a gap in the hills. It was soon followed by the appearance of a cohort led by Zhang Fei. With spear ready, he came racing down straight at Xu Zhu, who, whirling his sword, dashed to the front to meet him.

But Xu Chu was too drunk to stand against such an opponent. After a few bouts he was wounded in the shoulder, and fell off his horse. His men rushed to his help, and they carried him

away as they retreated, while Zhang Fei took all the wagons of grain and forage away to his own camp.

The defeated men carried their wounded leader back to the pass, where he was placed in the care of physicians. Then Cao Cao himself led out his army to fight a decisive battle with the men of Shu. Liu Bei went out to meet him, and, when both sides were arrayed, Liu Feng rode out to challenge. Cao Cao at once taunted his rival and his adopted son.

"Seller of shoes, you are always sending out this pretended son of yours to fight for you. If I only call my boy here, your so-called son will be chopped to mincemeat."

These words enraged Liu Feng, who raised his spear and galloped toward Cao Cao, who told Xu Huang to combat the young man. Liu Feng at once ran away in feigned retreat. Cao Cao led on his army, but almost immediately he was harassed by a cacophony of noises from inside his enemy's camps, the explosion of four bombs, the beating of drums, and the blowing of trumpets. Afraid he was being led into an ambush, he hastened to retreat. The sudden retreat only caused even greater confusion, for the soldiers trampled upon each other and many were killed. All ran off to Yangping Pass as quickly as they could.

But before they could have any rest the men of Shu came right up to the walls of the pass. All four gates were being attacked—fire at the east and south gates, shouting from the west, and rolling of drums at the north. Cao Cao, scared out of his wits, gave up the pass and ran away.

The road to safety was not easy. In front Zhang Fei barred their way of advance; at the back Zhao Yun cut off their chances of retreat; and from the side Huang Zhong attacked. Cao Cao was severely defeated. His officers succeeded in making a sortie and escorted him toward Ye Valley. Here, another great cloud of dust was seen in the distance.

"If that is an ambush it is the end of me," sighed Cao Cao.

The force came nearer, and then Cao Cao recognized not an enemy but his second son, Zhang. Now as a lad, Cao Zhang was a good horseman and an expert archer. He was more powerful than most men and could overcome a wild beast with his bare hands. Cao Cao did not approve of the young man's bent, and often urged him to study more.

"You spend too much time on your bow and horse but not on books. That is the mere valor of a soldier. Do you think you can make an honorable career out of that?"

But Cao Zhang replied, "I admire remarkable generals like Wei Qing* and Huo Qubing* and, like them, I want to establish my name fighting in the desert and command a mighty army able to overrun the whole land. What have I to do with scholarship?"

Cao Cao used to ask his sons what career they would like to pursue, and Zhang always replied that he would be a general.

"But what kind of a general?" asked Cao Cao.

“He should be imbued with firmness and courage, and dares to stand at the head of his officers and men in times of danger. His rewards and punishments should be fair.”

Cao Cao laughed with pleasure.

In the twenty-third year of the period Jian An, Wuhuan tribesmen revolted, and Cao Cao sent this son with 50,000 men to suppress the rebellion. Just as he was leaving, his father reminded him of his duty.

“At home we are father and son, but on the battlefield we are officer and his lord. The law knows no kindness, and you must be aware of this.”

When the expedition reached the scene of trouble he acted heroically, fighting always ahead of his men and smote the rebels as far as a place called Sanggan. The uprising was put down. He had lately heard that his father was smitten at Yangping Pass, and had come to his aid.

His coming greatly pleased his father, who said, “Now that my son has arrived, we can destroy Liu Bei for certain.”

So the army marched back again and encamped at Ye Valley.

Liu Bei was informed of the arrival of Cao Zhang, and he asked for a volunteer to face him in combat. Liu Feng offered himself first but Meng Da also desired to go, so both were given permission.

“See which one of you can succeed,” said Liu Bei.

Each officer had 5,000 men, and Liu Feng led the way. Cao Zhang rode out and engaged him, and in the third bout Liu Feng was overcome and ran off. Then Meng Da advanced, but hardly had the struggle begun when he saw that Cao Cao's men were in confusion. The cause was the sudden arrival of Ma Chao and Wu Lan. Meng Da immediately joined his comrades in the attack. Ma Chao's men, who had been nursing their courage for a long time, fought so ferociously that the men of Cao could not withstand their onslaught. But in combat with Cao Zhang, Wu Lan was slain. A tangled battle ensued.

In the end Cao Cao withdrew his army to encamp at Ye Valley. There he remained for many days, prevented from advancing by Ma Chao and fearing ridicule if he should retreat back to the capital. One day, while he was pondering over what course to take, his cook brought in some chicken broth. He noticed in the broth some chicken tendons, which somehow touched him to the heart. He was still deep in thought when Xiahou Dun entered his tent to ask for the password for that night. Involuntarily Cao Cao blurted out, "Chicken tendon."

It was passed on to the other officers. When Yang Xiu, the wit, heard the password he told all his men to pack up their belongings ready for a return march. Someone who saw this went to tell Xiahou Dun, who sent for Yang Xiu and asked him the reason for this.

He replied, "By tonight's password I see that the prince is soon going to return. Chicken tendons lack meat and yet it's a pity to waste them. Now if we advance we can't conquer, and if we retreat we fear we will look ridiculous. There being no

advantage here, the best course is to return. You'll certainly see the Prince of Wei retreat before long. I've made my preparations so as not to be hurried at the last moment."

"You do seem to know the prince's inmost heart," marveled Xiahou Dun, who then told his men to pack up. The other officers seeing this, also made preparations for departure.

That night Cao Cao's mind was too perturbed to fall asleep. So he got up, took a steel battle-ax in his hand, and wandered secretly through the camp. When he got to Xiahou Dun's tents he saw his men all packing up, ready to leave. Very much surprised, he made his way back to his own tent and sent for the general.

"Why are you packing up?"

"Yang Xiu told me about your plan to return," he said.

Cao Cao summoned Yang Xiu and questioned him, who replied with his interpretation of the chicken-tendon password.

"How dare you invent such a story and disturb the hearts of my men?"

Cao Cao ordered his guards to behead Yang Xiu and hang his head at the camp gate.

The victim was a man of acute and ingenious mind, but inclined to show off. His lack of restraint in containing himself had often aroused Cao Cao's jealousy. Once Cao Cao was having a garden laid out, and when it was completed he

went to inspect the work. Without uttering a word of praise or criticism, he wrote the character "alive" on the gate and left. Nobody could guess what he meant till Yang Xiu heard of it.

"'Gate' with 'alive' inside it makes the word for 'wide,'" he said. "The prime minister thinks the gates are too wide."

Therefore they rebuilt the outer walls on an altered plan. When complete, Cao Cao was asked to go and see it again. And he was delighted.

"But who guessed what I intended?" he asked.

"Yang Xiu," replied his men.

Cao Cao outwardly praised Yang Xiu for his ingenuity but inwardly he was displeased.

Another time Cao Cao received a box of cream cheese from Mongolia. He just scribbled three words on the lid and left it on the table. The words seemed to have no meaning. But Yang Xiu happened to come in, saw the words, and at once handed a spoonful of the contents to each guest in the room. When Cao Cao asked him why he did this, he answered with an interpretation of the words on the box, which, when worked out into their primary strokes, read, EACH MAN A MOUTHFUL.

"Could I possibly disobey your order, sir?" he asked.

Cao Cao laughed with the others, but in his heart he was again jealous of someone who seemed to excel in cleverness.

Cao Cao lived in constant fear of assassination, and to his attendants he often warned, “None of you should come near me when I am asleep, for I am likely to slay people in my dreams.”

One day he was enjoying a siesta, and his quilt fell off. One of the attendants saw it and hastened to cover him again. Cao Cao suddenly leaped up from the couch, slew the man with his sword, and lay down again to sleep. Some time after he got up, he simulated surprise, and asked who had killed his attendant. When the other attendants told him, he wept aloud for the dead man and had him buried in a fine grave. Most people thought that Cao Cao had slain the man while immersed in a dream, but Yang Xiu knew better, and at the funeral of the victim he remarked, “The prime minister was in no dream, but the gentleman in the grave was dreaming.”

This only increased Cao Cao’s hatred of him.

Cao Cao’s third son, Zhi, admired Yang Xiu for his talent and often invited him to his place, where they would talk the whole night.

Later Cao Cao considered appointing Zhi as his heir. When his eldest son Cao Pi learned about this, he secretly requested Wu Zhi to come and discuss this matter. Then fearing that someone might see his visitor, he had a large basket made, in which the advisor was smuggled into his residence. He gave out that the basket contained rolls of silk. Yang Xiu heard about this and informed Cao Cao, who sent men to watch at his son’s gates. Cao Pi, in alarm, consulted Wu Zhi, who told him not to be afraid but to fill a basket with real silk the next day and have it brought in as before. Cao Pi did as he was

told. When the searchers peeped into the basket they found inside only rolls of silk. They reported this to Cao Cao, who began to suspect Yang Xiu of plotting against his son. This also added to his hatred.

Another time Cao Cao, wishing to compare the abilities of his two sons Pi and Zhi, told them both to go out of the city, at the same time ordering the gate warden to forbid their exit. Cao Pi got to the gate first, was stopped by the wardens and returned. But his brother Zhi consulted Yang Xiu, who said, "You have the prince's order to go out. If anyone dares to prevent you, simply cut him down!"

So when Cao Zhi went to the gate and was stopped, he shouted to the warden, "I have the prince's order to go out—how dare you stop me?"

He slew the man who tried to stop him. Cao Cao, hearing of this incident, thought his younger son the more able. But when someone told him that the idea came from Yang Xiu, he was angry and took a dislike to his son Zhi.

Yang Xiu had also helped Zhi prepare replies to likely questions from his father, which the young man learned by heart and quoted when necessary. Every time Cao Cao asked him about his opinion on state matters, Zhi always had a fluent reply prepared. His father was not without suspicions, which were turned into certainties when the eldest son Pi gave his father the written replies that he had obtained from his brother's house by bribing his servants. Cao Cao was quite angry.

“How dare he throw dust in my eyes like this?” said Cao Cao. He was determined to kill the talented Yang Xiu.

Therefore it was only a subterfuge to send him to execution on the charge of destroying the morale of the soldiers. Yang Xiu was but thirty-four when he met his end.

Talented was Yang Xiu,

Born of an illustrious stock,
His pen traced wonderful characters,
His breast nurtured beautiful words.
When he talked, his hearers were amazed,
In a repartee his quick wit excelled.

He died because of misdirected genius
And not because he foretold retreat.

After executing his much-hated rival, Cao Cao pretended anger against Xiahou Dun and threatened to kill him as well, but later listened to those who begged him to show mercy.

The next day he issued an order to advance. The army moved out of the valley and came face to face with the men of Shu, led by Wei Yan. He summoned Wei Yan to surrender, but received abuse and scorn in return.

Pang De went out to fight Wei Yan, but while the combat was in progress fire broke out in Cao Cao’s camp and soldiers rushed over to say that the rear and center camps had been seized by Ma Chao. Fearing lest this should lead to a rout, he drew his sword and stood before the army, crying out, “Death for any officer who flinches!”

Therefore they pressed forward valiantly, and Wei Yan, feigning defeat, retreated. Thinking he had driven back this force, Cao Cao gave the signal for his men to turn toward the camp and fight with Ma Chao. He took up his station on the top of a hill, from where he could survey the field.

Suddenly a force appeared just below him, and the leader cried, “Wei Yan is here!” No sooner had he finished speaking than he fitted an arrow to his bow, then shot and wounded Cao Cao just above his lip. He fell from his horse. Wei Yan threw aside his bow, seized his sword, and came charging up the hill to slay Cao Cao. But just at that moment Pang De intervened from the side with a loud yell.

“Do not harm my lord!” he cried.

He rushed up and drove Wei Yan back. Then he escorted Cao Cao away. By that time Ma Chao had also retreated, and the wounded prince returned to his own camp.

Cao Cao had been hit full in the face, and the arrow knocked out two of his front teeth. When being treated by his physician he lay thinking over Yang Xiu’s words. In a repentant mood, he had the remains of the dead official decently interred.

Then he gave the order to retreat back to the capital. Pang De was appointed commander of the rear force. Cao Cao set out homeward in a padded carriage, escorted by his Tiger Guard.

Before they had gone far there was another alarm, warning of fire and ambush. The soldiers were all fear-stricken.

‘Twas something like the danger once at Tong Pass met,
Or like the fight at Red Cliff which Cao could ne’er forget.

How Cao Cao fared will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* Wei Qing (?– 106 B.C.), a reknowned general in West Han, who repeatedly defeated the Huns, thus securing the northern borders of the Hans.

* Huo Qubing (140–17 B.C.), a contemporary of Wei Qing, who also defended Han’s northern borders against the Huns.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

Liu Bei Becomes Prince of Hanzhong

Guan Yu Attacks and Occupies Xiangyang

The fire on two sides turned out to have been started by Ma Chao and his men, who were pursuing the retreating army. When Cao Cao withdrew to Ye Valley, Zhuge Liang anticipated that he would abandon Hanzhong, so he sent out Ma Chao and others in more than a dozen parties to hasten his retreat through incessant harassment. For this reason, Cao Cao, who was suffering from his wound, was compelled to keep moving. It was a dejected army fleeing for its life. Every man in the Cao army was dispirited, and none had any courage left. Day and night, they retreated as swiftly as they could, without even halting to rest. It was only after reaching Jingzhao that they felt secure again.

Then Liu Bei sent Liu Feng, Meng Da, and Wang Ping to take the remaining towns and cities in the region. The officials, knowing that Cao Cao had withdrawn, offered their submission. After peace had been restored among the people, Liu Bei rewarded his army generously, and all were joyful.

It was after this victory that the general body of Liu Bei's officers began to think that their lord should assume the title of "Emperor," but they dared not tell him so. However, they

sent up a petition to Zhuge Liang, who replied that he had already decided on this course. Then with Fa Zheng and others he went in to see Liu Bei.

Zhuge Liang said, “Now that Cao Cao really holds the reins of authority the people are without a true ruler. My lord, your kindness and sense of justice have spread throughout the empire. You have restored peace over this vast region of the west. It is now imperative that you become Emperor so as to satisfy both Heaven’s will and the desire of the people. Then by right and title you could destroy the arch rebel. This matter should not be delayed and we pray you to choose the auspicious day.”

But Liu Bei evinced great surprise and replied, “You are wrong, sir. Although I am of the imperial house, yet I am but a servant of the throne—and to do this would be rebellion against the Han house.”

“No, my lord,” Zhuge Liang replied. “Today, the empire is torn apart and many of the bolder spirits have risen and claimed the rule of various parts. The talented and the valiant, who have risked their lives in serving their lords, all desire to have the opportunity of serving an Emperor, and by doing so making their own names. Now, if you insist on modestly maintaining your righteous way I fear that you will lose popular support. My lord, I beg you to reflect upon this.”

“But you desire me to assume a place of the greatest honor, and I dare not. Let us give this matter more careful discussion.”

But with one voice his officers said, “If you reject this the hearts of your men will turn from you.”

At this Zhuge Liang interceded: “My lord, you have always made rectitude your motto. If you really object to the title of Emperor, I think you can temporarily take the title of Prince of Hanzhong, since you have already obtained Jingzhou and the west regions.”

“Gentlemen, though you may desire to honor me by the title of a prince, yet, without an edict from the Emperor, such an act would be usurpation.”

Zhuge Liang said, “The time demands recognition of the actual state of affairs, and not a rigid adherence to all the rules of propriety.”

Here Zhang Fei interrupted, roaring, “People with all sorts of family names want to call themselves rulers—how much more ought you, brother, who are of the imperial house? There’s nothing wrong for you to be Emperor, let alone Prince of Hanzhong!”

“Say no more,” scolded Liu Bei, roughly.

“My lord,” said Zhuge Liang, “it is fitting to adapt one’s conduct to circumstances. First take the princedom and then there is still time to petition for the throne.”

As there seemed to be no alternative, Liu Bei complied. In the seventh month of the twenty-fourth year of the period Jian An (A.D. 219), an enormous altar was set up at Mianyang, with appropriate flags and symbols set along five sides. All the

officials assembled there in order of their ranks. And at the request of the two ministers, Xu Jing and Fa Zheng, Liu Bei ascended the altar and received the headdress and seal of a prince. Then he took his seat, facing the south as a ruler should, and received the salutes and felicitations of all his subordinates as Prince of Hanzhong.

And his son Liu Chan (A Dou) was nominated as heir-apparent. Xu Jing and Fa Zheng were given very high positions. Zhuge Liang was reappointed Chief Counselor of the Forces, with the additional power of control over important issues of the state and the army. Liu Bei's two brothers, along with Zhao Yun, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong, were named the Five Tiger Generals. Wei Yan was made Governor of Hanzhong, and all the others were given ranks according to the services they had rendered.

As soon as the investiture was completed, Liu Bei composed a memorial and sent it to the capital. This is the document:

> I, Lui Bei, have but ordinary talents, yet I was created a general of high rank and commanded a great army. Though I received a commission to purge the empire of rebels and so bring tranquillity to Your Majesty's house and restore the dynasty, I was unable to cleanse it. Too long have I delayed to spread Your Majesty's sacred governance. The world is evil and troubled. As I sorrowfully ponder over it again and again in my mind I am distressed as one in severe pain.
>
> Rebellion began with Dong Zhuo, since when all kinds of evils have sprung up; cruelty and ferocity

have become rife. Thanks to Your Majesty's sacred virtue and inspiring presence, some of these evil doers have been eliminated by Your Majesty's loyal servants, who allied each other in a just cause to destroy the rebels, while others were smitten by heavenly power. As the fierce and the unruly have been exterminated, rebellion has gradually died down.

Only Cao Cao now remains, too long unpunished. He has claimed for himself the authority of the state, thus revealing his true intention of wicked rebellion. Once I, with General Dong Cheng, planned to destroy him, but the secret was discovered and the general suffered death. Without my allies I was a wanderer and my loyalty availed nothing. As virtuous efforts failed, Cao Cao became all the more vicious in his evil doing, ultimately committing the heinous crime of slaying Her Majesty the Empress and poisoning her two sons. Although I rallied together people who shared my faith, hoping to destroy him with all our energy, yet we were too weak to overcome him. Therefore the years passed and little was accomplished. Amid perpetual risk of being destroyed by my enemy I often feared that I might fail to repay Your Majesty's kindness to me. Waking and sleeping I sighed, and my nights were times of anguish.

Now my subordinates, quoting the ancient writing of the Book of Yu,* have pointed out to me our ancestors' emphasis on elevating the nine branches of their own clan members. They think that

hereditary succession of rulers is a fundamental principle. The House of Ji, who ruled the two dynasties of the empire of Zhou (West Zhou and East Zhou) and extensively set up their own clan, relied heavily on the support of the two lords, Jing and Zheng. When the great Founder of Han came to power, he ennobled his own family. Later, to wipe out the widespread influence of Empress Lu's family, the Hans mobilized all their members to re-establish the authority of the ruling house.

Now Cao Cao, an enemy of all rectitude, is assisted by many followers, and his treachery is manifest. Since the members of the imperial clan are few and weak, my subordinates, after reflecting upon the ancient models, suggested an expedient policy of elevating me, your humble servant, to Grand Minister of War and Prince of Hanzhong.

I have given this matter very serious consideration: I have received great kindness from Your Majesty and accepted the responsibility for a portion of the state, but I have not rendered any substantial service. My rewards have already exceeded my merits and I am in no position to receive even higher ranks to increase the burden of reproach on myself. But, I have been compelled by my subordinates, who have appealed to me in the name of justice. Should I refuse, the wicked will not be destroyed and the danger to the state will not be removed. The temple of Your Majesty's ancestors is in danger and the imperial prerogatives are failing. And my heart is eaten up with worry. If by this temporary expedient,

> peace for the dynasty could be maintained, I should not refuse at any cost. Therefore I have ventured to succumb to the request of my subordinates and accepted the seal of office for the glory of the state.
>
> Humbly I think of the exalted position and favor such a title granted me, and I would endeavor to show true gratitude. Like one on the brink of a cliff my anxiety is deep, for the responsibility is heavy. I must surely exert myself to the utmost, encouraging my armies and leading all committed to integrity, in accordance with the will of Heaven and the demand of the times, to smite rebellion so as to restore the dynasty. I hereby bow to present this memorial to Your Majesty.

When this memorial reached the capital, Cao Cao was in his palace at Yejun and it annoyed him immensely. “How dare this mean weaver of straw sandals behave like this? I swear I will destroy him.”

So he issued an order to muster the entire army of the state to wage a fierce war against Liu Bei.

But Sima Yi voiced his objection. “Your Highness, please do not take such great trouble to go on a distant expedition because of a moment’s anger. I have a plan to make Liu Bei bring disaster upon his own head without troubling us to bend a single bow. When his army is exhausted, we will only have to send one officer to fight with him and the victory will be ours.”

“What is your lofty plan, my friend?” asked Cao Cao.

“Sun Quan in the east has married his sister to Liu Bei, but he has stolen away the bride while he was away. On the other hand Liu Bei is still holding Jingzhou, unwilling to return the city to Sun Quan. So these two are bitter enemies. We can send an able speaker to deliver your letter to Wu and persuade Sun Quan to recover Jingzhou by force. That will put Liu Bei on his way to rescue Jingzhou with his army from the west, and at the same time you can send your army to take Hanzhong. Liu Bei will be rendered helpless and his situation will be perilous.”

The scheme pleased Cao Cao. He at once drew up a letter and sent it by the hand of Man Chong, who soon arrived in the east. As soon as Sun Quan knew of his arrival, he summoned his advisors to counsel.

Zhang Zhao said, “Wei and Wu originally bore no grudge against each other. It was due to Zhuge Liang’s intervention that our two sides fought for several years, and many lives were lost. Now this envoy has surely come to discuss peace terms, and he should be welcomed.”

Sun Quan took his advice and sent his advisors to conduct Man Chong into the city for a meeting. The envoy presented Cao Cao’s letter and said, “Wu and Wei have never had any quarrel, and our recent dissension has been incited by Liu Bei. My master sends me to make a covenant with you for a joint attack on Liu Bei. He hopes that you can seize Jingzhou, while he goes to capture the west. After Liu Bei is subdued, the conquered country will be divided between our two sides and we will forever respect each other’s territory.”

Sun Quan, after reading the letter, gave a banquet in honor of Man Chong and then arranged for him to rest in the guesthouse, while he discussed the matter with his council of advisors.

Gu Yong spoke first: "Although his intention is obviously to make us fight, Cao Cao's words are not entirely unreasonable. I think we can, on the one hand, ask Man Chong to go back and make a covenant with Cao Cao for a joint attack while on the other, send some spies over the river to find out Guan Yu's movements. Then we can decide how to act."

Zhuge Jin also put forward a plan: "I hear that Guan Yu has a son and a daughter. The daughter is too young to have been betrothed. Let me go and propose marriage of the girl to your son, my lord. If Guan Yu agrees, then we can arrange with him to attack Cao Cao together. If he refuses, then we will support Cao Cao, and try to seize Jingzhou."

Sun Quan agreed to this advice, and so after seeing Man Chong off he sent Zhuge Jin to Jingzhou to propose the marriage. Zhuge Jin was received in due politeness by his host, Guan Yu. After they had greeted each other Guan Yu asked him the reason of his visit.

"I have come to make a marriage offer. My master has a son who is a clever young man. I hear that you have a daughter, General, so I have come specially to propose a marriage between your daughter and my master's son. Thus, the ties between our two houses will be stronger for a combined attack on Cao Cao. This will be a perfect match and I hope you will consider my proposal."

But the warrior flared up. “My tiger daughter will never be married to a dog’s whelp! Were it not for your brother I would cut off your head at once. Say no more!”

Guan Yu called his servants to throw him out and Zhuge Jin, very scared, ran away with his hands over his head. Reaching his own place, he dared not hide the manner of his reception, but told the whole truth to his lord.

“What impudence!” roared Sun Quan in fury.

So he summoned his counselors again to consider an attack on Jingzhou.

Bu Zhi rose and said, “Cao Cao has long wished to usurp the throne, but he is afraid of Liu Bei. Now he wants us to attack Jingzhou. Clearly he is trying to shift misfortune onto us.”

“But I have long wanted to seize that place,” said Sun Quan.

“Cao Ren is already camped at Fancheng and Xiangyang,” continued Bu Zhi, “from where he can take Jingzhou by land without having to cross the Great River. Why doesn’t Cao Cao tell him to take it? Why does he want you, my lord, to send your army instead? This alone is enough to show his real intention. I think you can ask Cao Cao to make Cao Ren attack Jingzhou by land. Then Guan Yu will try to seize Fancheng with his army from Jingzhou. As soon as he leaves Jingzhou, you can send an army to seize it.”

Sun Quan was impressed by the soundness of the scheme and therefore he sent a letter with this proposal to Cao Cao, who adopted it readily, and sent Man Chong to help Cao Ren at

Fancheng as his assistant in the operation against Jingzhou. He also sent dispatches to Wu to ask for the assistance of Sun Quan's marine force.

Having delegated to Wei Yan the task of holding East Chuan, Liu Bei returned to Chengdu, where a palace was soon erected to befit his new status as Prince of Hanzhong. More than four hundred guesthouses and post stations were also built between Chengdu and Baishui. Grain and forage were accumulated in large quantities and weapons of all kinds filled his arsenal in preparation for the seizure of the capital and the whole of the country.

Then the alliance between Wei and Wu, along with their plot to attack Jing zhou, was reported to him and he hastily called in Zhuge Liang for counsel.

"I already anticipated that Cao Cao would do this," said Zhuge Liang. "But Sun Quan has many advisors who will propose persuading Cao Cao to order Cao Ren to start the campaign."

"But what am I to do?" asked the Prince of Hanzhong.

"You can send a special messenger to Yun-chang to confer on him his new title and tell him to capture Fancheng, which will so dampen the morale of the enemy troops that they will collapse quickly."

Therefore the prince sent Fei Shi, a senior officer from his Board of War, to take the seal of his new title to Guan Yu, who received the delegate with great deference and conducted him into the city. After they had arrived at the official

residence, Guan Yu inquired what new title had been conferred upon him.

“Chief of the Five Tiger Generals,” replied the envoy.

“And who are the five?”

“They are yourself, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong.”

“Yi-de is my brother,” cried Guan Yu angrily. “Meng-qi (Ma Chao) is of a distinguished family and Zi-long has been with my elder brother so long that he is like a brother. It is right for him to be of the same rank as I am. But what sort of a man is this Huang Zhong that he is given equal status as myself? A true hero does not stand shoulder to shoulder with an old soldier!”

And he refused to accept the title and seal.

“You are wrong, General,” said Fei Shi, smiling. “Of old, Xiao He* and Cao Shen† helped the Founder of the Han Dynasty in his great enterprise and were his closest friends, while Han Xin was but a defector from Chu. Yet Han Xin was later created a prince, and so was ranked higher than the other two. I have never heard that these two resented it. Now the Prince of Hanzhong has named his Five Tiger Generals, but he is still your brother. As brothers, you two are inseparable—you are the prince and the prince is you. How can any others compare with you? The prince has always treated you with the greatest kindness and in return, you should share his sorrow and joy, disaster and good fortune,

but not fuss about a mere title. I beg you, General, to reflect upon this."

Guan Yu, realizing how wrong he was, bowed low to thank the messenger for having prevented him from making a grave mistake. He then received the seal with all humility.

Next Fei Shi produced the prince's edict, ordering Guan Yu to capture Fancheng. Guan Yu lost no time in obeying this command. He appointed Fu Shi-ren and Mi Fang leaders of the van and ordered them to camp outside Jingzhou with their force of a thousand men, while he himself entertained the envoy inside the city. Before the dinner was over there came a report of fire in the new camp, and Guan Yu hastened out of the city to see what was amiss. He found that the two van leaders, who had also been feasting, had left a smoldering fire unextinguished behind their tent; a spark having fallen into some explosives, the fire spread to the whole camp, killing soldiers and destroying all the weapons and supplies. Guan Yu and his men did all they could to put out the fire and it was after the fourth watch that he re-entered the city. There he summoned the two officers before him, reproached them for their neglect of duty, and ordered them to be put to death.

However, Fei Shi interceded for them, saying, "It is not auspicious to put your own officers to death before the army has even marched. You might reprieve them at least."

Guan Yu, his anger by no means subsided, said to the two guilty officers: "Were it not for my respect for General Fei I would certainly have you both beheaded."

Then he ordered them to be flogged forty times each, and removed them from their positions as van leaders. As further punishment, Fu Shi-ren was sent away to guard Nanjun and Mi Fang to guard Gongan.

"Now be warned," said Guan Yu. "If, when I return from my victory, there is the least sign of neglect of your responsibilities, you will suffer for both faults."

The two men flushed crimson with shame and, murmuring obedience, went away.

Then Liao Hua was made van leader and Guan Ping his aide, while Guan Yu himself took command of the main army, with Ma Liang and Yi Ji as his advisors. Before the army set out the envoy took his leave and returned to Chengdu, taking with him a man called Hu Ban, son of Hu Hua, who had earlier come to Jingzhou to seek shelter with Guan Yu. Remembering how the man had saved his life (see Chapter Twenty-Seven), Guan Yu asked the envoy to present him to the Prince of Hanzhong in order to be awarded a position.

The day that Guan Yu offered a sacrifice to his standard in preparation for the campaign, he was resting in his tent when suddenly there dashed in a completely black boar, huge as a bullock. It came straight at him and bit his foot. He angrily drew his sword and killed the creature, and it squealed with the sound of tearing cloth. Guan Yu awoke in shock. The attack had been a dream but he could feel a gnawing pain in his left foot.

The dream perplexed him, and he could not explain it. He sent for his adopted son, Guan Ping, and related it to him.

Guan Ping suggested a favorable interpretation, saying that the boar was something of a royal beast, like the dragon; and that having the dragon at his feet meant a rise in status for him. Then he told the dream to his subordinates, some interpreting it as auspicious and some the reverse.

"Well, I'm nearly sixty," said Guan Yu. "There is nothing to regret, even if it means I'm going to die."

Just about that time another envoy came with an edict from the Prince of Hanzhong, creating him Chief General, with honorable insignia of rank and control over the nine districts in Jingzhou. When the officers congratulated him on his new honors they did not forget the dream.

This cleared Guan Yu of any perplexing doubts. Soon he departed with his army along the highroad to Xiangyang.

At Fancheng, Cao Ren was startled when he heard that the great warrior was coming himself to seize his city, and was inclined to take a defensive posture. But his second in command, Zhai Yuan, did not support this policy: "The Prince of Wei has ordered you, General, to act in concert with Wu to take Jingzhou. Now Guan Yu's coming like this is to walk to his own death—certainly we have no reason to avoid a conflict."

However, the newly-sent advisor, Man Chong, urged caution. "I know Guan Yu is both brave and resourceful. He is not to be treated lightly. I think firm defense is our best policy."

His proposal was scoffed at by another officer called Xiahou Cun. "This is the talk of a pedant. Don't you know the plain

truth that when the flood approaches, bank up to keep it out; when enemies come, meet them on the battlefield? Our opponents are exhausted after their journey, while we are fully rested. We are sure to win a victory."

Cao Ren was persuaded by this argument. He placed Man Chong in defense of the city while he went outside to counter Guan Yu. When he learned of the coming of his enemy, Guan Yu called to his side Guan Ping and Liao Hua, to whom he gave certain orders. Then the two armies met, and Liao Hua rode out to challenge. Zhai Yuan accepted—but soon after the combat began, Liao Hua turned to leave the field as if beaten. Zhai Yuan went after him. The Jingzhou men retreated twenty li or so.

The following day, when the Jingzhou soldiers came again and offered battle, Xiahou Cun and Zhai Yuan both went out. The maneuver of the preceding day was repeated, and Cao Ren's men pursued their enemy for another twenty li. But suddenly there was a loud shouting behind them, mingled with the rolling of drums and blowing of horns. Cao Ren hastily called upon his men to return. But as they did so, Guan Ping and Liao Hua turned and followed on their heels, throwing them into confusion.

Cao Ren understood that he had fallen into a trap, so he hurriedly led a troop to rush back to Xiangyang. He got to within a short distance of the city when he saw before him an embroidered banner waving in the wind, and out came the great warrior with his sword, ready to strike. Cao Ren, trembling with fear, dared not put up a struggle, but turned toward Xiangyang. Guan Yu did not pursue.

Shortly after, Xiahou Cun came. At the sight of the powerful warrior he angrily came forward to fight him, only to be slain in the first encounter. His colleague Zhai Yuan fled, but Guan Ping swiftly caught up with him and slew him. Then the pursuit was continued, and the losses on Cao Ren's side were very heavy. Many were drowned in the Xiang River. The battle ended with Cao Ren retreating back to Fancheng and Guan Yu in possession of Xiangyang.*

After the victory, Guan Yu went into the city, where he calmed the people and rewarded his men. However, one of his officers, called Wang Fu, warned him of possible danger in Jingzhou. "You have obtained this city very easily," he said, "but the task is not ended. Although Cao Ren's men have been beaten and their courage broken, there is still the danger from Wu. Lu Meng is at Lukou, and he has long cherished the desire to lay hands on Jingzhou. If he takes advantage of your absence to attack the city, what is to be done?"

"I have been thinking of this myself," replied Guan Yu. "You go and attend to this matter. Find some high points on the river bank, about twenty or thirty li apart, and set up alarm beacons. Assign fifty men to guard each one. If you spot the men of Wu crossing the river, raise a flame by night and a smoke by day. I will go and smite them myself."

Wang Fu replied, "Fu Shi-ren and Mi Fang are holding the two strategic points. I am afraid they may not do their best. You should appoint someone else to supervise the whole area of Jingzhou."

"There is no need for anxiety—I have put Pan Jun in charge."

“Pan Jun is jealous and greedy, not a suitable man for the task. I think it is better to replace him with Zhao Lei, now of the commissariat. He is loyal and honest, a much more desirable man for the post.”

“I know Pan Jun very well, but I have delegated him for that duty and cannot change now. Zhao Lei is taking care of the food supplies, which are also very important. I don’t think you need be too anxious. Just get along with those beacons for me.”

Wang Fu unhappily took his leave. Guan Yu then told his adopted son to prepare ships to cross the river and attack Fancheng, where Cao Ren had retreated after the defeat.

Now Cao Ren said to Man Chong, “Neglecting your advice, I lost my men, my two officers, and the city of Xiangyang. What am I to do now?”

“Guan Yu is too brave and skillful for us to treat lightly. We’d better remain on the defensive,” replied Man Chong.

Just about this time came the tidings that Guan Yu was crossing the river to attack them again. Cao Ren was greatly alarmed. Man Chong maintained his policy of defense, but this was contradicted by one of the officers, who was all for going out to meet the enemy.

“I ask for a few thousand men,” he said, “and I will meet the enemy on the Xiang River.”

Man Chong tried to dissuade him from going but the officer became angry. He shouted, “You civil officials always talk

about defense. But will defense drive off the enemy? Don't you know what the Art of War says: 'Attack while your enemy is halfway crossing a river.' Now Guan Yu is doing exactly that, so why not attack him? It will be quite another matter if you let him reach the walls and get near the moat."

As a result of this argument he was given 2,000 men, whom he led to the riverbank ready to do battle. And there he found Guan Yu already deployed. As the embroidered banners were unfurled, Guan Yu rode out. The officer was about to ride forth and engage in battle when his men, panic-stricken at the sight of Guan Yu's fierce countenance, started to flee. In vain he tried to call them back. Guan Yu came on with a rush and Cao Ren's men again lost the day. Many were slain, and the remainder ran into Fancheng. Cao Ren dispatched a letter to his master to plead for help.

The messenger went to see Cao Cao and tell him that Guan Yu had occupied Xiangyang and was also besieging Fancheng.

Cao Cao pointed to one of his officers and said, "You can go and lift the siege at Fancheng."

The man at once stepped out. It was Yu Jin.

"Let me have an officer to lead the vanguard," he said.

"Who would like to volunteer?" asked Cao Cao, looking around.

“I would,” cried a man. “I will offer my meager services, for what they are worth. And I will capture this fellow Guan Yu and bring him before your standard.”

North Wei had dispatched another troop,

Ere East Wu sent out a single man to help.

The name of the bold volunteer will be told in the next chapter.

Footnotes

* An ancient book about the earliest rulers of China.

* Xiao He (?–193 B.C.) was prime minister of the first emperor of Han Dynasty.

† Cao Shen (?–190 B.C.) was prime minister, after Xiao He, of the first emperor of Han Dynasty.

* Here is a confusion in the book. According to Chapter Fifty-One, Guan Yu seized Xiangyang from Xiahou Dun after the Battle of the Red Cliffand there is no mention of the place ever being re-taken by Cao Ren.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

Pang De Takes His Coffin on a Campaign

Guan Yu Drowns Seven Enemy Forces

The bold officer who pledged to make an end of Guan Yu was Pang De. Cao Cao was very glad that he'd volunteered. "Guan Yu enjoys a high reputation in the whole country. So far he has not met his rival, but now he is going to meet you and he will find his match."

So he conferred on Yu Jin the title of General–Conqueror of the South and on Pang De, General–Conqueror of the West and Leader of the Vanguard, and commanded them to lead seven forces to leave for Fancheng.

These seven forces were composed of sturdy fighters from the north. Before setting out two of their officers, named Dong Heng and Dong Chao, led their colleagues to pay their respects to the commander, Yu Jin. At the interview, Dong Heng said: "General, you are leading seven forces to lift the siege of Fancheng and you expect to win the war. But is it wise to place Pang De in command of the van?"

"Why?" asked Yu Jin, surprised.

“As you know, he was once under the command of Ma Chao and only surrendered to our lord because there was no alternative. Now his former chief is given high honor in Shu, one of the Five Tiger Generals, and his own brother is an officer there, too. To send him as leader of the van is like trying to extinguish a fire with oil. Why not ask the Prince of Wei to replace him with another?”

Without further delay Yu Jin went to see Cao Cao and laid before him the objections to Pang De’s appointment. Cao Cao, seeing the truth of this, summoned Pang De and told him to yield his seal as Leader of the Vanguard.

“Why do you reject my service, my lord? I was just about to do my best for you.”

“Well, I did not distrust you at first, but Ma Chao is now in Shu and your brother too, both in the service of Liu Bei. Even if I myself have no doubts, all the other leaders are against you.”

Pang De took off his headdress and bowed his head with such force that blood streamed down his cheeks.

“Since I surrendered to you, my lord, I have been a recipient of great kindness from you, for which I would undergo any sufferings to show my gratitude. Pray trust me. Although my brother is in Shu, he and I are not even on speaking terms. When my brother and I were at home together his wife was a wicked woman and I slew her, pretending I was drunk. My brother has never forgiven me, and he hates me so intensely that he swears never to see me again, so we are enemies. As for my old master, Ma Chao, he is bold but not clever, so he

had to seek shelter in Shu, a defeated and dejected man. Now he serves his own master, and I serve mine. Our old friendship is over. How could I ever think of another after your kindness to me?"

Cao Cao helped him to his feet and soothed him, saying, "I have always known what a noble man you are, and what I said just now was to relieve the fears of the others. Now you can strive to win fame, and if you do not disappoint me I will treat you well."

Pang De bowed again to thank him. When he returned to his house, he ordered some workmen to make him a coffin. After it was finished he invited all his relatives and friends to a banquet, and the coffin was set out in the reception room for all to see. His guests were aghast. They asked him why he should put out such an inauspicious object on the eve of an expedition. Holding a drink in his hand, Pang De said, "The Prince of Wei has been very generous to me, and I vow to repay him with my life. I'm about to go and fight this Guan Yu. If I can't kill him, he will kill me—even if he doesn't kill me, I will kill myself, and so I have prepared this coffin to show that I won't break my vow."

The terrible pledge saddened the guests, and they fell to sighing. Then he sent for his wife and son, the latter whom he commended to her care.

"I have been appointed leader of the van of this expedition, and my duty binds me to die on the battlefield. If I die, our son is in your special care. The child is born with unusual looks, and when he grows up he shall avenge his father."

Both mother and son wept bitterly as they bid him farewell. Then the army set out, and the coffin was carried along. Pang De told his officers to place his body in there if he was killed by Guan Yu.

"And if I slay him," he added, "I'll bring his head back in this coffin as an offering to our prince."

All his five hundred subordinate officers said in unison, "You are so loyal and brave, General—we must certainly follow you to the end."

The vanguard then marched away. Someone told this to Cao Cao, who was very pleased, saying he had no anxiety with such an officer leading his men.

But Jia Xu said, "I am rather worried, though. Pang De is driven by too reckless a passion to fight to the death with Guan Yu."

Cao Cao also became anxious for his general's safety, and he hastily sent Pang De a warning message, which said: "Guan Yu is brave as well as resourceful. You must be most cautious in combating with him. Conquer him if you can—but remain on the defensive if you cannot."

"Why does our prince extol this Guan Yu so?" said Pang De to his colleagues when he heard this new command. "But I think I'll be able to destroy his reputation of thirty years."

"The command of the prince is to be obeyed," admonished Yu Jin.

Pang De hastened to Fancheng in all the pomp and panoply of war, with gongs clanging and drums rolling as the army marched.

Guan Yu was sitting in his tent when his spies came to inform him of the approach of the enemy from the north, seven divisions in all, of bold fighting men. They also told him that the vanguard leader, Pang De, who had brought along a coffin, had sworn in impudent language to fight to the death with him.

Rage took hold of Guan Yu. His face changed color and his beard shook as he roared, "There is never a fighting man in all the country but trembled with fear at hearing my name. How dare this fellow disdain me?"

So he ordered Guan Ping to attack the city while he went out to slay the impudent boaster.

"Father," said Guan Ping, "You are as mighty as Mount Tai and you mustn't trouble yourself to compete with a mere pebble. Let me go and fight this Pang De."

"All right, you go and try—I'll come and support you soon."

So Guan Ping took his sword and rode out with his men to fight Pang De. Both sides drew up for battle. On the side of Wei there flew a single black flag, on which was inscribed Pang De of Nanan in white. The leader himself wore a black robe with silver armor and rode a white charger. He stood out in front backed by his five hundred men, and a few foot soldiers were there too, bearing the gruesome coffin.

Guan Ping began abusing his opponent: “Shameless betrayer of your master!”

“Who’s that?” asked Pang De of his followers.

“That’s Guan Yu’s adopted son, Guan Ping.”

Pang De cried, “I have an order from the Prince of Wei to take your father’s head. You are but a weakling and I will spare you. Quickly tell your father to come out.”

Guan Ping, exasperated, dashed forward, flourishing his sword. Pang De went to meet him, and there followed thirty odd bouts with no advantage to either.

Both sides then drew off to rest. Soon, news of this combat reached Guan Yu, who was again thrown into fury. He sent Liao Hua to attack the city of Fancheng while he himself went to oppose Pang De. Guan Ping met his father and related how the fight was tied. So Guan Yu rode out, holding his great sword, and shouted to Pang De, “Guan Yun-zhang is here! Come out quickly and be slain.”

The drums rolled as Pang De rode out and replied, “I have the order of the Prince of Wei to take your head. In case you disbelieve it, here is the coffin, ready for you. If you fear death, get down from your horse and surrender.”

“You imbecile!” cried Guan Yu, “What can you do? It is a pity to stain my Blue Dragon sword with the blood of such a rat as you!”

Then he galloped toward Pang De, flourishing his mighty sword, and Pang De, whirling his blade, came forth to meet him. In a moment they engaged. After about a hundred bouts the lust of battle seemed to grow for both combatants and the two armies were struck in awe and amazement.

But the men of Wei, for fear their champion might suffer, sounded the gongs of retirement. Almost at the same time, Guan Ping, concerned for his father's age, also clanged his gongs. Thus both warriors drew off to their own sides.

"Guan Yu is really a mighty man of war," said Pang De, when he had got back among his own men.

Then his chief, Yu Jin, came to see him and said, "I hear you fought a hundred bouts with Guan Yu but still could not overcome him. Wouldn't it be prudent to retire out of his way?"

But Pang De replied excitedly, "The prince has given you the command of an army, but why are you so soft? Tomorrow I will fight till death with Guan Yu. I swear I will never give way."

Yu Jin could not alter his decision, so he went back to his own camp.

When Guan Yu got back he also praised the swordsmanship of his opponent and acknowledged him a worthy enemy.

"As the saying goes, 'The newborn calf fears not the tiger,'" said Guan Ping, "But if you slay this fellow, father, you will have only killed an insignificant fighting man of the Qiang

tribe. Remember how highly my uncle has placed his trust in you. You cannot allow any accident to happen."

"How can my resentment be assuaged save by the death of this man?" responded Guan Yu. "I have made up my mind, so say no more."

The next day Guan Yu took the field first, but Pang De quickly came out. Both arrayed their men and then went to the front at the same moment. This time neither spoke, and the combat began immediately. It went on for fifty bouts and then Pang De turned his horse and fled, dragging along his sword. Guan Yu went in pursuit, and Guan Ping, afraid of any mishap, followed as well.

As he followed, Guan Yu, anticipating his opponent to employ a foul stroke of his sword, berated his foe: "You rascal! I know what trick you are up to. Do you think I will be afraid of you?"

But Pang De had only pretended that he would resort to a sudden blow of his sword in order to cover up his intention to use his bow. He furtively hung the sword onto the saddle, fitted an arrow to his bow, and was just on the point of shooting when Guan Ping, who was sharp-eyed, shouted out a warning to his father.

"Do not shoot, you scoundrel!"

Guan Yu hastened to look, but the bowstring sang and the arrow came flying toward him. It was too late to avoid it and the arrow wounded his left arm. Guan Ping at once rushed to his father's side and rescued him back to camp. Pang De had

turned back to follow, whirling his sword, but ‘ere he had a chance to strike, the gongs of his own side rang out so loudly that he thought there was something amiss in the rear and he returned to camp.

In fact the signal for retreat had been sounded by Yu Jin out of jealousy, for he had seen Guan Yu wounded by the arrow and he feared his colleague might win the glory of success, which would eclipse his own.

“Why did the gongs clang?” asked Pang De when he returned.

“Well, our prince has warned us of Guan Yu’s craftiness and valor. Though he was wounded I feared there might be some trick on his part. So I ordered the gongs to be sounded.”

“I would have killed him if you had not done that,” said Pang De.

“Haste makes slow progress—it’s better to be cautious,” said Yu Jin.

Pang De, ignorant of his chief’s real intention, regretted greatly having missed such a good chance.

Guan Yu went back to camp, and the arrowhead was puled out of the wound. Fortunately it had not penetrated deeply, and the usual remedies against injuries by metal were applied. Guan Yu now hated his enemy so intensely that he swore to have his revenge for this wound.

His officers tried to calm him down. “Rest a few days first and fight him when you get well.”

The following day Pang De renewed his challenge, and Guan Yu wished to go out to fight. However, he yielded to the entreaties of his officers. And when Pang De set his men to abuse the great warrior, Guan Ping saw to it that his father never heard of it. After ten days of futile challenges, Pang De proposed a plan to Yu Jin.

“Evidently Guan Yu is unable to stir due to his arrow wound,” said Pang De. “We can take advantage and attack his camp with all our seven divisions. Thus we will relieve the siege of Fancheng.”

But out of the same fear that his colleague might succeed Yu Jin again urged caution and obedience to the warning of the Prince of Wei. He refused to move his men in spite of Pang De’s repeated requests; furthermore, he moved the seven forces to a new camp behind some hills, about ten li north of Fancheng. He himself led his men to hold the main road, but sent Pang De to deploy behind a valley so that he could do nothing.

To the son’s great joy Guan Yu’s wound quickly healed. Soon after, Guan Ping heard of Yu Jin’s movement and suspecting some ruse, he told his father, who went up to a high point to reconnoiter. Looking round, he noted the general slackness inside Fancheng, the new enemy camp in a valley to the north of the city, and the swift current of the Xiang River. After memorizing the topography, he called the guide and asked him about the name of the valley.

"Fishnet Stream," was the reply.

Guan Yu chuckled. "I will capture Yu Jin," he said.

His men asked him how he knew that. He replied, "Why, how can the 'fish' last long once it is caught in a 'net'?"

Those in his train gave but little weight to what he said, and presently he went back to his own tent. It was just then the time for fall rains, and a heavy downpour came on lasting several days. Guan Yu gave orders to get ready boats and rafts and other equipment for a water crossing.

Bewildered, Guan Ping asked his father, "What's the use of such equipment in a dry land campaign?"

"Well, it's not for you to know," replied his father. "Our enemies, instead of camping on the open ground, have chosen to crowd themselves into the precipitous valley of the Fishnet Stream. These are the days of the fall rain and in no time the Xiang River will swell. I have already sent men to dam up all the outlets. When the river rises to its highest I will open the dams and let the water pour into the valley and the city of Fancheng. All the soldiers there will be drowned."

Guan Ping bowed in full admiration of his father's foresight.

It is time to return to the men of Wei. They had camped in the gully, and after several days of heavy rain an officer named Cheng He ventured to speak to his general.

He said, "The army is camped here in a depression and the ground is very low. There are hills but they are too far off and

our men are suffering from these incessant fall rains. Lately I hear the Jingzhou men have moved to higher ground and moreover, they are preparing fighting boats and rafts at the mouth of the Han River. If the river floods our men will be in real danger. Something should be done as soon as possible."

But Yu Jin only scoffed at his words, saying, "Are you trying to upset my men? I will kill you if you dare to bring that up again."

Cheng He left feeling greatly mortified. But he went to relate this to Pang De, who saw the wisdom of his words and promised him that if Yu Jin would not move his camp the next day, he himself would do so.

That night there came a great storm. As Pang De sat in his tent he heard a thundering noise as of 10,000 horses in a stampede, like the rolling of war drums shaking the earth. Extremely alarmed, he hastily mounted his charger to go out and see what it meant. Then he saw the water rushing in from the four sides and eight directions and the men of the seven forces flying from the flood, which speedily rose to a height of ten feet. He and Yu Jin and the other officers sought safety by hurrying up the hills.

At dawn, Guan Yu and his men came up in large boats with flags flying and drums beating. Yu Jin, whose following had been reduced to about three score, saw no way of escape and so he surrendered. Guan Yu made them strip and then took them on board.

After that he went to capture Pang De, who was standing on a hillock with the two Dongs, Cheng He and the faithful five

hundred, all without armor. At the approach of Guan Yu, Pang De betrayed no sign of fear, but went boldly to meet him. Guan Yu surrounded the party with his boats, and ordered his archers to shoot. When more than half the men had been struck down, the survivors became exasperated. The two Dongs entreated their chief to give in. But Pang De only raged.

"I have received great kindness from the prince—do you think I will bow my head to another?"

He slew the two Dongs and then shouted, "Anyone who says surrender will be as these two."

So the others put up a desperate struggle to beat off their enemy, and they held their ground till midday. Then Guan Yu's men redoubled their efforts, and the arrows and stones rained down upon the men of Wei, who were ordered to fight hand-to-hand with their assailants.

"The valorous leader does not defect to avoid death—the brave warrior does not break faith to save his life," cried Pang De to Cheng He. "This is the day of my death. You must fight on to the last."

So Chang He pressed on but was soon shot by Guan Yu and fell into the water. Then the remaining soldiers yielded.

Pang De alone fought on. Then a boat happened to come close to him. With a tremendous leap Pang De bounded on to it and slashed at the occupants, killing a dozen instantly. The others jumped overboard and swam away. Then Pang De, one hand still holding his sword, tried to maneuver the boat across

the river to the city. At that moment there came rushing downstream a big raft, which dashed against his boat, overturning it and throwing him into the water. The officer on the raft jumped into the water and captured him alive.

It was Zhou Cang, who was a good swimmer, and after living in Jingzhou for many years, was thoroughly expert in amphibious warfare. Besides, he was very powerful and so was able to capture Pang De.

In this flood perished the whole of the seven forces, except the few that saved themselves by swimming—these latter, having no way of escape, surrendered to the victors.

In the depth of night rolled the drums of war.

Flooded was the flat land around the city of Fan.
Guan Yu's plan to drown his foes had no match
And his prowess was told down the ages.

Guan Yu then returned to the higher ground, where his tent was pitched, and took his seat to receive his prisoners. The soldiers brought in Yu Jin, who prostrated himself humbly and begged for his life.

"How dared you oppose me?"

"I was bound by an order from my superior," pleaded Yu Jin. "Have pity on me, sir, and I swear I will repay you with my life."

“To execute you would be like killing a dog or a hog. It would be soiling weapons for nothing,” laughed Guan Yu, stroking his beard.

Yu Jin was bound and sent to the prison in Jingzhou. “I will decide your fate when I return,” said Guan Yu.

Then Pang De was brought forth. He came out, anger flashing in his eyes, refusing to kneel but standing boldly erect.

“You have a brother in Hanzhong and your former chief Ma Chao is also a general in Shu. Had you not better join them?”

“I would rather perish under the sword than surrender,” cried Pang De.

He reviled his captor without ceasing till, losing patience, Guan Yu ordered him to be put to death. He stretched out his neck for the executioner’s sword. Out of pity he was honorably buried.

As the water had not receded, they again boarded their boats to seize Fancheng, which now stood as an island, with waves lashing against its walls. Under the pounding of the water the city wall began to crumble and the residents, male and female, tried in vain to strengthen it with mud and bricks. The officers, scared out of their wits, went to see Cao Ren and said, “It is beyond man’s power to fend off this danger. Since the enemy is not yet here we may have a chance to escape by boat at night. We will lose the city, but we will save our lives.”

Cao Ren agreed. But Man Chong interposed before the boats could be got ready. He pointed out that the sudden flooding could not last for long and would certainly recede within ten days.

He added, “Though Guan Yu has not assaulted the city, he has sent another force to Jiaxia. He has not advanced so far because he is afraid lest we might fall upon his rear. Remember, too, that the abandonment of this city means the whole area south of the Yellow River no longer belongs to us. I pray, General, you will do your best to hold this place to safeguard our country.”

Cao Ren joined his hands together to thank Man Chong, saying, “What a serious error I would have committed had it not been for you, sir!”

Then riding his white charger he went up to the city wall, gathered his officers around him and vowed: “The prince has commanded me to defend this city, and defend it I will. Whoever dares to mention abandoning the city will be put to death.”

Inspired by this, his officers all promised to defend the city till their last gasp. Then they saw to it that the means of defense were good. Hundreds of archers and crossbowmen were stationed on the wall, which was closely watched night and day. Ordinary folks, old and young, were made to carry earth and rocks to strengthen the wall. After some ten days the flood gradually receded.

Since his sweeping victory over the men of Wei, Guan Yu’s fame spread even wider and his name became a terror to all.

About this time his second son, Xing, came to visit his father. Guan Yu thought this a good opportunity to send his report of success to Chengdu, and so he told Guan Xing to deliver to the Prince of Hanzhong a dispatch mentioning each officer's services and requesting promotions for them. Guan Xing accordingly took leave of his father and left for Chengdu.

After his son's departure he divided his men into two divisions, one under himself to attack the city, and the other to go to Jiaxia. That day Guan Yu rode over to the north gate. Reining in his steed, he pointed with his whip toward the defenders on the wall, and called out: "Surrender, you bunch of rats! What are you waiting for?"

Cao Ren, who was on the wall, saw that Guan Yu had worn only a breast-plate and one of his arms was left uncovered by his green robe. He hastened to order his five hundred men to shoot, who at once let out a tremendous volley of arrows toward the great warrior. Guan Yu hastily withdrew, but an arrow struck his right arm and he fell from his horse.

> Seven forces had just perished by the river's overflow;
>
> An arrow from the city wall laid a valiant warrior low.

What would befall Guan Yu will be told in the next chapter.

Continued in Volume 3 of The Three Kingdoms.

Ron Iverson first visited China in 1984 as the personal representative of the Mayor of Chicago as part of a Sister Cities program. For the past 30 years he has continued to regularly visit China and has founded joint business ventures with Chinese partners and taught Business Strategy at Tongji University in Shanghai. He also personally arranged the first ever exhibition of Forbidden City artifacts from the palace Museum in Beijing to tour the US.

Early in his visits to China, Iverson discovered The Three Kingdoms and came to realize the enormous cultural significance the Chinese people place in the book. Believing that one needed to be familiar with the principles revealed in the book in order to find business or political success in China, and being dissatisfied with existing translations, Iverson decided to fund and edit a new translation aimed towards delivering the thrill of a contemporary novel while imparting understanding of a key aspect of Chinese culture.

Yu Sumei is a professor of English at East China Normal University. She has translated several English language books into Chinese and is the first native Chinese speaker to translate The Three Kingdoms into English. She invested a total of two years into working on this new translation of The Three Kingdoms, spending the time on sabbatical in New York with her daughter, who typed the translation out as she completed it.

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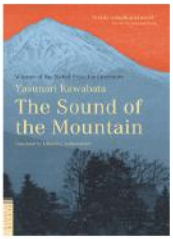

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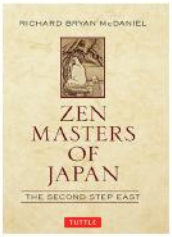

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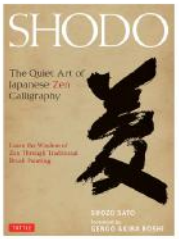

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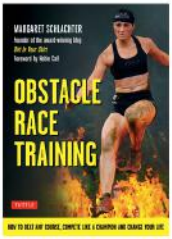

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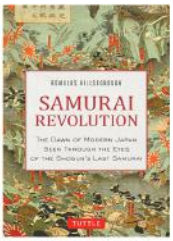

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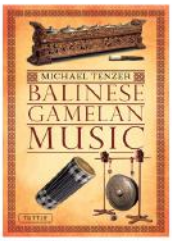

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